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# THE MAN CALLED JESUS

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# THE MAN CALLED JESUS

"THE humanity of Christ, what is it? His inner personality, His individual life, the courses of His thought, the lights and shadows of His affections, the conflicts of His will, as He passed through the drama of His years on earth, and moved before the eyes of mankind, and was heard by living ears in His teaching by day, and overheard in His prayers by night. This assemblage of characteristics belongs to the realm of positive fact, more or less visible and appreciable by observers; and there, in the midst, if anywhere, in the foldings of His secret worship, and the lines of His spiritual attitude, must whatever was divine in Him have worked and told its tale."—MARTINEAU, "The Seat of Authority in Religion," p. 574.

* * * * * * * *

**"The ultimate symbol of Divinity**
**How can we dream of? We have got no sense**
**Whereby to seize it; but in Him we touch**
**The ultimate symbol of Humanity;**
**Humanity that touches the divine,**
**By some fine link intangible to us,**
**Upon that side of mortal consciousness**
**That looks towards Death."**

"THE DISCIPLES."

# THE MAN CALLED JESUS

BY

JOHN P. KINGSLAND

'Ο ἄνθρωπος ὁ λεγόμενος Ἰησοῦς.—JOHN ix. 11.

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# INTRODUCTION.

IT is a matter of prime importance that the Christian should gain as true and deep an insight as he possibly can into the Character of Him whom he professes to adore and serve.

The goal of the Christian life is the attainment of Christlikeness. But, "if we are to try to be like Christ, we must know what He was like."* Nay further, if we are to gain a true knowledge of God, we must learn to know Him through the Man who alone fully declares Him. We apprehend the Character of God, truly, only to the extent to which we have apprehended the Character of Jesus Christ.

But though the witness of the Gospels has been before the world for eighteen centuries, it will hardly be seriously questioned by any thoughtful mind that we are still very far indeed from a true and thorough apprehension of Him whose life and teaching they so simply and graphically record.

This admission does not of itself involve those who have hitherto undertaken to unfold Christian truth in any reproach. The Son of God—the Light of the world—must always transcend the comprehension of

* Stalker, "Imago Christi."

those who aspire to know Him. Even as the Apostle Paul acknowledged, after he had been for many years an apostle, that "to know Him" was still one of his unrealised ambitions, so must all feel who have come face to face with that inexhaustible Personality.

But have those who have hitherto undertaken the task of expounding Christianity and leading Christian thought striven, as they should, to gain, and, after they have gained it, to unfold, a true and full knowledge of Jesus Christ? Have they assigned to this department of Christian teaching its due importance? We fear that it must be admitted that they have not.

At some periods of the history of the Christian Church, and doubtless, among individuals in all ages, the prime importance of a true apprehension of Christ's Character has been clearly recognised. In Apostolic days, and to a considerable extent in the Alexandrian school of the fourth century, this was undoubtedly the case. We can thankfully acknowledge also that during recent years attention has become more and more fixed on this subject. The many "Lives of Christ" which the last century has seen, and the many works (among which "Ecce Homo" stands conspicuous) which have had for their object a fuller unfolding of the Mind and Spirit of Christ, bear abundant witness to this fact.

But, broadly speaking, until quite recently, Christian writers and thinkers have not occupied themselves as they should with this theme. They have for the most part devoted their attention to other, and, we venture to think, in comparison with this, far less profitable subjects; or if they have taken up this one, they have

preferred to discuss the metaphysical, rather than the moral and spiritual aspects of the Person of Christ. Moreover, even when the prime importance of the true apprehension of the Character of Christ has been recognised, few thoughtful attempts have been made to unfold that Character from the Gospel narratives.

What the writer I have already quoted says concerning the author of the "Imitation of Christ," is, in the main, true of all writers who have dealt with the Character of Christ, from the early centuries down almost to the present day. "While to him (*i.e.*, the author of the 'Imitation') Christ is the union and sum of all possible excellencies, he constructs Christ out of his own notions of Excellence, instead of going to the records of His life, and painting the portrait with the colours they supply."

We need only point to the conception of Christ which prevailed during the Middle Ages, and which to a considerable extent still prevails in Roman Catholic countries, and to the prevalence of Mariolatry, which to a great extent has resulted from that conception, to show how far men's notions of Christ have failed to correspond with the truth.

In the present day the necessity of a reconsideration, we might almost say, of a reconstruction of the Character of Christ is an urgent one. The widespread prevalence of doubt and scepticism demonstrates that the current conceptions concerning Him are inadequate for the spiritual needs of many thoughtful men; which is only another way of saying that they are too far removed from the truth. We have entered on a

new age, and need a new—*i.e.* a truer—Christ to set before it. Such a Christ can only be found by subjecting the Gospels to a new and more thoughtful examination.

There are many in these days who find it impossible to accept, and who consequently refuse to be guided by, those conclusions concerning the Person of Christ which orthodoxy propounds. The authority of the Christian grammar has been, to them, seriously impaired. They cannot take it and use it as a guide in their search for truth. If they are to find the truth, they must find it by the inductive, not the deductive, method. They must start from, and reconsider, the facts of the life of Christ with which the Records furnish us, if they are to be led to re-affirm those dogmas which summarise previous deductions.

It is doubtless true that this method will not commend itself to the majority of professing Christians. They may regard it as superfluous, and even, possibly, as irreverent. The majority are quite prepared to accept the dogma of the Deity of Christ as the *terminus a quo* of their religious thinking; and are quite willing to follow the deductive method in their study of the Gospels. They probably will have little sympathy with a work which only attempts to make that dogma the *terminus ad quem.* The writer, therefore, wishes it to be clearly understood that this book has not been written for those who take that position. He has no desire to unsettle the minds of those who are fully established in the faith. To those who find themselves able to believe in the Deity of Christ, and to study the Gospels in the light of that truth, he would

not say one word to tempt them to abandon that belief and that method; and he trusts that if any such happen to read the following pages, they will not find in them anything which will disturb their faith, or jar on their susceptibilities. But he would repeat that the book is not primarily intended for them.

It is to those who feel unable to accept and work from the dogma of Jesus Christ's Deity—to the type of mind which is represented by Philip, to whom Jesus Christ made the appeal "Believe me for the very works' sake" (John xiv. 11), that the writer addresses himself chiefly in the following pages. The book is a humble attempt, by the use of the inductive method, to lead those in doubt and perplexity up to faith. "That is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural" has been the guiding principle the writer has ever striven to keep in mind. Jesus Christ's divinity lies in—shines through—His humanity. It must be discoverable there. If He was Godlike—if there was in Him the "union and sum of all possible excellencies," we must be able to find them if we only steadfastly *look*. His Mind and Spirit must be such that, on examination, we must be able—nay—compelled, to pronounce them transcendently beautiful and good. We must find in Him, as a Man, all those qualities and perfections which we instinctively recognise as divine, if we are to hail Him sincerely and intelligently as the Son of God.

Such is the conviction of the writer; and, impelled by it, he has been led to the endeavour, of which the following pages are the result, to demonstrate, by a careful and reverent examination of some of the lead-

ing incidents of Christ's life, how full of grace and truth that matchless Spirit was.

If even in the smallest degree he has succeeded in showing how superhumanly perfect His Character, when carefully studied, reveals itself to be, and can thus lead his readers to exclaim with more of the heartiness of clear-sighted conviction, "Of a truth this is the Son of God," he will feel that his labour has not been in vain.

The writer is well aware that no demonstration of the divine beauty and perfection which Christ's Character displays, however full and complete—even were such a complete demonstration possible—is of itself sufficient to effect the salvation of men. It is faith that saves, and faith is an act and attitude of the soul, which it can rarely, if ever, be led to adopt by being confronted with proofs, however overwhelming, of its reasonableness. After it has been most conclusively shown that Jesus Christ is infinitely worthy of trust, it still remains for men to trust Him. You can lead men to the gate of the Kingdom of God; but the new birth, by undergoing which they can alone pass through it, you cannot accomplish for them.

But still, the more truly and fully Jesus Christ is presented to men in all the unsurpassable fulness of that grace and truth which He manifested in His life and death—grace and truth which the Gospels, fragmentary as they are, not unworthily portray, and which consequently can be dug out of the Gospels by those who will diligently, and with unbiassed minds, search

for these spiritual treasures—the more likely are men to be led to the faith which saves.

And this remains true in spite of the indubitable fact that it is not so much because they need their minds illuminating, as because they need their hearts changing, that men continue in unbelief.

The writer is quite prepared to admit that, in spite of the marred and imperfect representations of Jesus Christ which have been presented to the world, He has always been presented with sufficient clearness to "convict the world of sin because it has not believed on Him." It has not been because Christ has not, even in the darkest age, shone as the world's Light, but because men, their deeds being evil, have loved darkness rather than light, that they have refused to believe on Him.

But that fact can never be used as an argument against any attempt to unfold the grace and truth which He manifested. Eyes blinded by "the god of this world" may be impervious to the strongest light, but there is less excuse for them when the light which pulses round them is the light of the unclouded sun, than when it comes to them from a sky overshadowed by clouds, robbed of much of its splendour and warmth.

The writer would be the last to deny that the best way to get to know the Character of Jesus Christ, and to realise His divine perfection, is not by merely studying the Gospel narratives, however thoroughly and carefully, but by supplementing that study by earnest endeavour to follow His example, to copy His life, to

keep His commandments. More light will only come to those who faithfully strive to live up to the light they have. This, too, is the only way by which men can attain to that sweet, mysterious consciousness of "fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ," and of the presence of the abiding Spirit—the Spirit of Truth, Who will lead into all truth—which to have, is to possess a knowledge not "about" but "of" Christ, and God in Him; a knowledge which is a spiritual, and not merely an intellectual knowledge of Him; to have which knowledge, the Apostle John declares, is to have eternal life. (John xvii. 3.)

One other remark the writer feels compelled to make. The plan which he has followed in these pages has obliged him to lay great stress on the true humanity of Jesus Christ; and although he trusts he has not been altogether unsuccessful in his attempt to show that that humanity lacked none of the elements of Divine perfection, some readers may feel that the conclusion arrived at falls short of, and does not adequately account for, those statements in the Gospels which emphasise His "proper Deity"; the fact, for instance, that He was the eternal Son who "came out from the Father and came into the world," and the fact of His pre-existence,* which the doctrine of the Incarnation implies. To such as feel that in this respect these meditations are defective the writer would submit that his object has by no means been to elaborate a complete and consistent portrait of Jesus Christ in

* The writer has made an attempt to deal with the question of Jesus Christ's pre-existence, within the lines to which he has confined himself, in the last chapter.

harmony with the antithetical statements of the creeds. That were, indeed, an audacious attempt. No such portrait has ever yet been painted: it is doubtful if such a portrait ever can be painted. The Person of Christ must ever remain mysterious. We can apprehend Him: we cannot comprehend Him. No composition, however elaborate and well-balanced, can combine and include in a perfect and satisfying harmony all the notes and tones with which the Gospels furnish us of that unique life. *Quomodo Deus homo?* is probably an unanswerable question, though it is one which the human mind cannot but continue to ask.

The completest answer can be found, not by indulging in *a priori* speculations, but by contemplating the Man Christ Jesus as the Gospel narratives present Him to our gaze; by tracing up the scattered lines of light which radiate from His life, till they lose themselves in the dazzling splendour of the Eternal Light and Life.

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# THE MAN CALLED JESUS.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE BOYHOOD OF JESUS (Luke ii. 40-52).

THIS is the only glimpse which we get of Jesus Christ during all the thirty years which elapsed between His birth and His baptism.

There are, it is true, apocryphal stories which attempt to make up for the silence of the Gospels, but their tone and character are so entirely out of harmony with these, that there cannot be the slightest hesitation in pronouncing them incredible. They are valuable only as showing how impossible it is that any man, or any number of men, could have *invented* the Gospel narratives.

One further hint is furnished us with regard to this silent period of the life of Jesus—the hint contained in the question, "Is not this the carpenter?" (Mark vi. 3); but this account of His visit to Jerusalem in His twelfth year is the only one in which He is brought clearly before us—the only one which permits us not simply to *infer*, but to *see* what manner of Boy He was.

It heightens our desire to know more; but probably no biographer could have told us anything more

which would have materially added to our knowledge of Him. "The child grew and waxed strong, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him." "He advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men." "He went down with His parents and came to Nazareth, and He was subject unto them." These brief statements, probably as completely as accurately, summarise both His inner and His outward life. If we add: "And he worked at His father's trade," the account of these thirty years is as complete as biography can make them. No biographer could have told us by what silent, slow degrees, that "advance in wisdom and stature" was accomplished; no biographer could have told us—for *He* told no one—what deep, unutterable thoughts the wonderful literature of His nation stirred within Him as He made acquaintance with it; or what were His meditations as He plied His tools, or walked the streets of Nazareth; or what deep, and ever deeper draughts of truth His Spirit drank in, as He roamed the hills, and revelled in the beauty of God's fair world.

There were no "Sorrows of Werther," no "Everlasting No's" to be recorded in His case; only such experiences as are too silent and too deep to be depicted.

Yet we cannot be too profoundly grateful for this one clear glimpse of Him, during this long period of silent growth, which we are able to catch. For it enables us to see clearly that in His case too "the child is father of the man." The portrait which is presented to us here harmonises perfectly with that

which is given us of His ripe manhood—in that respect contrasting must strikingly with the apocryphal stories of His childhood. The lifted veil discloses to us just such a Boy as we could have hoped to find, though the reality, while it justifies, yet far surpasses all hope. We find in the Boy traits precisely similar to those which we find subsequently in the Man. We find that the unique Personality is there already, not as yet fully developed, but nevertheless, rich with all the promise and the potency of the perfect Son of Man and Son of God.

Let us endeavour, then, by a reverent analysis of this incident, to bring out some of the most important traits of character displayed by this twelve years old Boy.

Note first, His *thirst for truth*—the craving as of the bud, for the light and dew of heaven—under the impulse of which His mind expanded more and more, until He had gained that perfect knowledge of the truth which characterised His mature years.

It was this which prompted this Boy of twelve to go fearlessly to the Rabbinical school; and made Him not only sit and listen at the feet of the learned men there, but boldly stand forward and ask them questions.

And the fact that He was not, as other boys of His age would most assuredly have been, wholly absorbed in wonder and surprise at the strange sights which presented themselves to His gaze in the famous city—then for the first time visited—and in the tumult of the feast; but that He sought the school of the Rabbis, to listen and to question, throws a flood of light on the

tone and temper of His mind, and enables us without hesitation to say what kind of spirit and disposition must have been His, both then and in previous years. It shows that already He must have had His mind occupied with thoughts and problems, which present themselves only to the few, and to them only in far later years. It shows us that in the quiet of the home at Nazareth, His deep, pure, earnest spirit had, even long before that time, begun to absorb truth from every available source. And now, alert and eager, with a hundred questions on His lips to which no one at Nazareth had been able to give an answer, He presses forward to drink from this new fountain, to which for the first time He has access.

He must have found it very far from a satisfying one. But little of the living water of life was to be found at that time in those ancient wells—far from sufficient to quench *His* thirst. But this He could hardly have known before He had been there to see. It seems evident that it was in the expectation of satisfying His craving for knowledge and truth that He sought the temple school; a craving which He naturally expected the learned doctors there would be able to satisfy. The point to be noted as most remarkable is, that He *should* have gone there, to listen and to ask questions, when most boys—is it too much to say, all other boys of His age?—would have thought of, and cared for, nothing beyond the spectacle presented by the famous city and its moving crowds.

The second remarkable trait in the Boy Jesus which this incident reveals is, His *wisdom:* "All who heard

Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers."

That is an extraordinary thing to be said of a boy of twelve! These men He listened to and questioned were some of the most learned men in Israel—men deeply versed in the Scriptures, and well acquainted with the vast mass of comment and criticism thereon, which centuries of earnest study had accumulated. It is true they had almost entirely lost their hold on the spirit of those Scriptures, by a slavish adherence to the letter of them, but that did not hinder them from recognising understanding and wisdom when they encountered it.

And this Boy amazed them: He already gave evidence of possessing a wisdom which exceeded their own. In the seclusion of His home at Nazareth, and with no one to teach Him except His uneducated parents, and the scribe attached to the village synagogue, He had gained a wisdom which astonished the wisest of the land! Already we discern in Him, well-developed, the wisdom which, on so many occasions during His public ministry, He so conspicuously displayed—the wisdom which on more than one occasion baffled and silenced His enemies, and compelled them to admit that "never man spake like this man."

These traits are exceedingly remarkable, but the one which comes before us next is still more extraordinary.

His thirst for truth, and His wisdom, are evidences that He was a Boy wonderfully endowed—that He had not only great natural gifts, but that undefinable quality which we term "genius." But His answer to

His parents gives us a glimpse into the depths of a consciousness which already we cannot but pronounce *superhuman*—a consciousness which stands out in startling contrast to its surroundings, and which displays such unique features, that the question is forced on us: "Whence hath this Boy these things?"

"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" or, as the Revised Version renders it, "In My Father's house?"

There are two remarkable things in this reply: the word He uses for God, and His consciousness of having a mission.

Whence did this Boy obtain the knowledge that God was His *Father?* It is only in a very few passages in the Old Testament that this term is applied to God, and in these it is never used to describe His relations with the individual, but only with the nation: it certainly was not the name by which the Jews of Jesus' day were in the habit of speaking of Him.

But even if we admit that from His study of the Scriptures, or from His home teaching, He had learnt to call God by that name, the wonder is hardly lessened. For He says, "*My* Father," indicating that He already had the consciousness of personal union and communion with God, on that basis of trust, and affection, and obedience, on which only a Son in whom the Father is well pleased, can stand.

No thoughtful reader who ponders this expression can fail to realise that we have revealed to us here a consciousness, the depths of which are beyond our fathoming. The spirit of this Boy of twelve is already *alive* with that eternal life which consists in knowing

God—alive to a degree which we but poorly define by calling it "remarkable," or even "unexampled." How *can* we adequately express its uniqueness, except by calling Him "the only-begotten"?

It will be appropriate here, though almost superfluous, to point out how strikingly in harmony with His subsequent teaching is this name which He gives to God, and the consciousness of relationship with Him which His use of it implies. The Fatherhood of God, and the life of Sonship with Him—is not the whole of Christian truth summarised in these two articles of faith? And here we find that already, He who gave these truths in all their fulness to the world, had grasped them, and was in possession of the life which results from a vital realisation of them, at an age when most children have not yet begun to despise their toys!

And no less remarkable—no less startling in its singularity—is His consciousness of having a mission. Whatever the exact meaning may be of the phrase: *ἐν τοῖς του πατρός μου*, the underlying consciousness to which it gives expression is manifest. He had a God-appointed life-work to do, *and already He knew it.* "Wist ye not that I must be in My Father's house? I should have thought you would have known that I should be found *here*, where I can best gain that knowledge and wisdom with which I must equip myself for my appointed work." That is what His answer implies.

Language altogether fails us in the attempt to do justice to such a wonderful manifestation of *purposefulness* (such a purpose too!) in one so young; and

as to explaining it! How can we explain it otherwise than by acknowledging that this Spirit, and this Consciousness, is the Spirit and the Consciousness of the incarnate Word of God?

But we have not yet exhausted the intellectual and spiritual wealth which this glimpse into the mind and spirit of this Boy discloses.

His *obedience* is no less remarkable than the other traits of Character of which we find Him to have given evidence. "He went down with His parents and came to Nazareth; and He was subject unto them," we are told.

It would not have been at all surprising if such a Boy, conscious of His superiority, not only to His uneducated parents, but to the Jerusalem doctors, had resented parental interference; even developed conceit and self-will, and deemed Himself able to judge and decide for Himself much better than His parents could judge and decide for Him.

And certainly the temptation, on this occasion, to resist the will of His parents must have been no small one.

In all probability He must have earnestly desired to remain in Jerusalem, and avail Himself of the opportunities it afforded of mental culture, and of gaining a wider knowledge of men and things.

Nazareth must have been a very dull place to go back to, after He had made acquaintance with Jerusalem—Nazareth with its little school, its uncultured society, and its dull monotony of daily toil. *Here* was a chance of gaining knowledge and wisdom—of "being about His Father's business," which, it might

easily have seemed to Him, not merely unwise, but wrong to let slip.

But if such thoughts came to Him, He did not allow them to influence Him.

He not only recognised, with perfect clearness, what was the right and fitting course to be pursued on this occasion—thus giving evidence that already He possessed that unique clear-sightedness with regard to duty, *i.e.*, the Will of His Father, which He invariably displayed in after life; a clear-sightedness which did not fail Him even when at length—amid many tempting alternatives—His Father's will decreed the Cross:—He not only saw, with marvellous correctness of spiritual vision, that at that time to obey His parents was a more important duty than even to be about His Father's business (or perhaps it would be more correct to say, He saw that this subjection to His parents was, at the time, the best way of being about that business), but—and this is what is so remarkable—*He showed a perfect willingness to obey.*

"He went back to Nazareth, and was subject to them." He went back to Nazareth and, for *eighteen years more*, He grew and waited.

With a *patience* and a *self-control* no less remarkable than the other traits of Character which this incident demonstrates Him to have possessed, He subjected Himself to His parents, and kept to Himself the great thoughts, and the great purpose, which possessed His mind and heart.

He waited and ripened in solitude and silence, working as a carpenter in His father's shop, till He was *thirty*—(think of it! think of the effort, of the patience,

and self-control, which were required in order to do that!)—till in the voice of John He recognised the voice of His Father, saying to Him, "Go now, Thou art ready."

This, briefly sketched, is what is revealed to us of the Boy Jesus in this one incident of His boyhood which the Evangelists record.

A thirst for truth, a wisdom, a consciouness of God, and of having a call from God, an insight into duty, an obedience, a patience, and a self-control, each separately most remarkable, most marvellous, in a Boy of His age,* and in combination constituting a Character absolutely unexampled--a Personality whose depths already are far beyond our fathoming—this is what this glimpse of Him reveals. "The child was father of the man." He who at twelve years of age showed Himself to be possessed of all these combined excellencies, did not disappoint the promise of His early years. He ripened into the wise, calm, patient, loving, sinless, perfect Man, whom all the ages have acknowledged to be the Express Image of the invisible God—the only-begotten Son of the Eternal Father.

* Some allowance should possibly be made on account of the more rapid development of children in the East; a Jewish boy of twelve is probably as advanced as a boy of fifteen or sixteen is with us; any fair allowance, however, which we may feel bound to make on this account, does not materially lessen the singularity of the Character and Consciousness of the Boy Jesus as He is presented to us in this incident.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE EIGHTEEN YEARS OF SILENCE.

IN the previous chapter we have endeavoured to show, by an analysis of the only incident of the Boyhood of Jesus which the Evangelists record, what kind of a Boy Jesus was at the age of twelve.

We wish now to consider that period of His life which lies between His first visit to Jerusalem, and His entrance on His public ministry: to try to estimate the significance of the fact that beyond the brief statements of Luke, "He went down with His parents and came to Nazareth, and He was subject unto them"; "And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men"; and the casual reference to this period of His life which is contained in the question, "Is not this the Carpenter?" (Mark vi. 3) nothing is told us about Him, or what He did between the ages of twelve and thirty.

Eighteen silent years followed that one most noteworthy and significant incident of His boyhood. "He went down to Nazareth and was subject to His parents": that was in the beginning of His thirteenth year: we hear no more of Him till we are told, "In

those days" (*i.e.*, when John was baptizing) "Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized of John in the Jordan (Mark i. 9); at which time "He was about thirty years of age" (Luke iii. 23).

The silence, viewed in the light which the incident recorded of His boyhood throws upon His Character when He entered this silent period, and in the light which streams from His ripe manhood, is in reality more impressive and significant than the fullest record. That there is nothing to tell of these years, that He should so have conducted Himself that no memory of them survived, beyond the fact that He was a Carpenter, speaks volumes. It gives us a revelation of His Character which is perfectly in keeping with what precedes, and with what follows. It is not what we should have expected. No one—no novelist—endeavouring to depict a perfect man, would have dreamt of passing in silence over those eighteen years. They cover just that period of life which, as the novelist knows, is usually most full of incident, and most fateful. And yet when we ponder the fact that in the case of Jesus nothing is told us of these years, we can see that the silence is natural and right. We can see that no other course of action than that which Jesus adopted, and which left nothing to be recorded of Him except that He practised a trade, would have harmonised with His Character as we find it developing in the Boy, and as we find it perfected in the Man.

The fact that He could, and that He did, keep Himself to Himself, and live a life of unnoticed toil for eighteen years, reveals to us a divine wisdom, and

strength, and perfection in Him, no less striking than, while perfectly in keeping with, the qualities He displayed in boyhood: we can see that such a period of silence and self-restraint was necessary, inevitable; that it formed a suitable preface to, that it constituted the only possible preparation for, the faultless perfection of His manhood.

Let us try to realise the true significance of these eighteen years of silence. Let us try to understand what indications of the Character of the Man are furnished us by the fact of His silence: let us try to *see* how divinely strong and wise He must have been, *to be silent* all those years.

Bearing in mind what His Character and disposition as a Boy was, at the time when He entered on this silent period, let us first compare (or perhaps it will be more correct to say, contrast) His life during the next eighteen years with the corresponding period of the lives of other men.

From twelve to thirty! Just the most important period of a man's life. The period in which his character is moulded. The period when the blood is hottest; when the imagination paints the future in the brightest colours. The period during which the spirit is most eager; when it is most difficult for a man to control and subordinate to wise use his enthusiasms; when his disgust at the slow-going, conservative old world, jogging on in her well-worn ruts of custom, is greatest, and he is most likely to run his head against stone walls. A time when "knowledge comes but wisdom lingers"; when any one who is conscious of strength, or who has a spark of ambition—especially

any one who is moved by the promptings of genius—is sure to attempt something; is sure to feel that he ought to be up and doing something; either in the way of making a name for himself, or of securing for himself a position in the world, or of forwarding the cause of truth and right.

Nearly all men of the greatest genius have made their mark in the world during this period of life.

Alexander the Great before he was thirty had conquered half the world. Pompey had quelled a rebellion and earned the name "great." Napoleon by the time he was thirty had blown away the Revolution with his "whiff of grape-shot," and had made himself First Consul of France. Shakespeare at that age had written many of his Plays, and had made a name. Shelley's career was over when he had only passed that age by a few months. Keats wrote all his poems and died before he was twenty-seven. Byron at thirty had reached the height of his fame. And this youth—Jesus? did nothing! Year after year He remained at Nazareth working at the carpenter's bench. Year after year He kept pent up within Him the desires and longings and aspirations of His heart—kept to Himself the truths which were continually orbing themselves more and more clearly to His mind; gave no hint of the consciousness that He had a mission; year after year He restrained His desire to be about His Father's business, and contented Himself with toiling at His trade.

Is not that wonderful? wonderful that He should have selected such a path of silence for Himself; still

more wonderful that He should have unswervingly kept to it!

What a contrast to the early careers of other gifted young men is here presented to us. What a different spirit this Youth manifests from that of so many youths of genius, who, born and brought up like Him in humble and narrow circumstances, have striven wildly to "burst the bands of circumstance," have grappled with what they deemed their evil star, and have succeeded, or have died in the attempt, but have never thought of *submission.*

What might He not have become if He had resisted the will of His parents, and remained at Jerusalem to study at the schools? What a name he might have made for Himself! What opportunities of self-culture He threw away, by occupying in mere manual labour the years which might have been devoted to learning! Was not that tempting path—the path which most of the gifted youths of His nation followed—the one wherein He might best fit Himself for "His Father's business"?

Doubtless these thoughts—these temptations—came to Him: He would not have been human, and "in all points tempted like as we are," if they had not come. But in a wonderful way He overcame them—put them aside. He had the conviction that that hard path of self-repression and silence was the right path for Him—the path which His Father desired Him to tread. And so, with the great thoughts, and hopes, and purpose, which we have seen Him to possess at the time of His visit to the temple—great then, and undoubtedly ever growing greater—*He waited.*

Keeping them all to Himself, He lived on unnoticed, unappreciated; performing the humble round of daily duties which came to Him; known to His friends and associates only as the Son of Joseph, the carpenter; while all the time He grew into clearer consciousness of the fact that He was the Son of God; and, by His choice of this hard path, and by the unswerving steadfastness with which He walked it, He was adding proof to proof that His Sonship was a reality, and that "He that sent Him was with Him, because He did always the things which were pleasing to Him."

Such was the difference between the conduct of this Youth and that of other gifted youths; and when we consider what He was, and what He became, we are lost in wonder and astonishment, both at the fact that He felt He ought to wait, and at the fact that He was content to wait. Nothing is more astonishing than the fact that He should choose, and that He should keep to, a path so strange and so difficult—yet, as we can see now, the right path.

For, that that path *was* the right and best one for Him to tread, is plainly shown by the results which were produced by His treading it. When we see what kind of a Man He was when He emerged from his obscurity, and entered on His public career, we see how wisely and rightly He acted, in keeping silent so long. These eighteen years of silence enabled Him to develop into full-orbed perfectness. Silently and secretly the best things ripen, and they ripen best when they are not *forced*. So it was with Him. When He did come forward He was completely ready. His subsequent career displays no single trace of immaturity, of

hesitation, or of weakness. His will had gained an iron strength by His long self-repression; His mind had developed into crystalline clearness; His Spirit had ripened into the perfect beauty of holiness.

It is of course possible for any one to argue that some other path than this which He chose, might have produced similar results. It would perhaps be somewhat difficult to disprove such an assertion—though we think it could be disproved—but it is quite sufficient to point out that the path He did choose—that hard, strange path of silence—produced in Him results which the choice of no other path could have excelled: for the result was—*perfection.* They were not wasted years, those years of silent toil. He lost during them nothing worth losing, and He gained—who can say how much?—by renouncing the tempting path of learning, and making choice instead of the quiet obscurity of Nazareth. It was a long, long waiting, which must have tried His faith and patience to the utmost, but He proved Himself the Son in whom the Father was well pleased, by the way in which He stood the test, and, in the end, faith was justified, and patience reaped the reward of her perfect work. It was a hard discipline to which His Father subjected Him—none but those who have felt the promptings of genius, and the burnings of passionate desire to serve God and man, can say how hard it must have been for Him to sit still and wait:—it was as long and hard a training and discipline as any son of man has been subjected to—nay! longer and harder; where can we find a parallel to it? It was nevertheless a training and discipline fit and necessary for Him who was pre-

destined to the awful glory of perfect Sonship. His submission to it without a murmur proves Him to be the Son. That He emerged from it what He was when He went to John to be baptized:—the Man who could conquer the temptations in the wilderness; the Man who could conceive, and could unswervingly abide by the unique plan of action which He adopted; the Man who could choose the path of suffering, and poverty, and shame, instead of the path of worldly success, and resolve to found a spiritual kingdom in the world, and not a temporal one; the Man in whom even His enemies could find no sin; the Man whose trust in His Father never wavered, whose self-control was perfect, whose wisdom was faultless, whose love led Him to the cross:—that He emerged from His silence such a Man as this—the peerless Jesus of the Gospels—proves that His long, hard training had not been too long, or too hard—proves that it was no other than the loving, moulding, unfaltering pressure of His Father's hands, fashioning Him with stern, relentless patience—as a potter lovingly and laboriously fashions some priceless vase—into the peerless perfection of His well-beloved.

These, briefly sketched, were the results which the eighteen years of silence accomplished. Jesus entered upon them such a Boy as we have seen in our examination of the account of His first visit to Jerusalem with His parents: He emerged from them *such* a Man.

We shall have frequent occasion in the course of these pages for dwelling on various aspects of the full-orbed perfection of that Manhood; but we cannot complete our examination of this silent period of the

life of Jesus, without some attempt to infer what the Character of the Youth and Man must have been, who could choose, and could so long continue in, such a strange and difficult path.

Must we not admit, then, in the first place that He displayed a consummate *wisdom* in His choice of that path of silence, and those years of obscurity? The doctors in the temple were astonished at His wisdom; that same wisdom is displayed in this choice of His, and it may well astonish us.

That it was a supremely wise choice does not admit of doubt. His spirit could ripen and mature in the quiet of the little town of Nazareth, and amid the sweet influences of home and of nature, far better than in the schools at Jerusalem. At Jerusalem indeed He might have gained a book-learning which He never did gain; but, knowing what the teaching of the schools was at that time, we can unhesitatingly assert that it was far better for Him to be without the barren knowledge which they strove to impart. It is not improbable that His three days' experience amply convinced Him of this—that His quick intelligence discerned that He could "search the scriptures" to far more profit at home than there. That at any rate He did gain a knowledge of the scriptures, without the aid of the schools, which astonished His enemies, and was more than sufficient to enable Him to cope with them in argument, we know. And by studying them for Himself, He was able to read them without the "veil" which, as Paul says, lay on the hearts of His countrymen when they read Moses. He gained an understanding of the

spirit of the Old Testament writings by His quiet study of them, which the Rabbis could readily have helped Him to miss, but could have afforded Him little help in gaining.

Yes! home and quiet were undoubtedly the best for Him; but how supremely wise He must have been to be able to *see* that they were the best! How marvellous, that He was not dazzled by the glamour of learning, and that He discerned the hollowness of the ambition to become a Rabbi! Can we point to any parallel instance? Is not such wisdom unexampled, unique? Here is a young man conscious of power, possessed with the desire to gain knowledge, and to fit Himself for noble work in the world, conscious too of having a splendid mission to accomplish, and burning with an enthusiastic desire to be about it; the one right and best path for Him is the path of silence and obscurity for eighteen years: and He sees and chooses it!

The world would have called Him mad—would have said, perhaps did say, He was throwing away His chances, wasting the best years of His life. There has never been another youth who would not have said the world was right. He, with supreme, amazing wisdom saw that *that* was the best. We can readily understand that He felt His need of being "perfected"—felt that He ought to develop all His powers to the full, before He set about, and in order in the best way to set about, His Father's business; but how, *how*, did He know that they needed no forcing in any hothouse of human learning, but would develop best unaided, at the carpenter's bench, in the society

of His parents, and on the lonely hills of Galilee? It is marvellous! it is sublime! Language fails us utterly in the attempt to do justice to the insight and wisdom displayed in such a choice.

And no less marvellous than the wisdom of which the choice of such a path gives evidence, is the patience and the self-control to which it bears witness.

For, what sublime patience He must have had, to be able to wait year after year: to feel Himself every year growing in wisdom, and stature, and in favour with God and man, and still to wait! Eighteen years! and as every year came round the voice of duty still said to Him, "Not yet": and He took to His tools again.

And what self-control! What an iron strength of will He must have had, to be able to thus hold Himself back! What a mighty power of self-repression! The great sinning, suffering, dying world lay around Him; He could not go outside His door without seeing how greatly it stood in need of a Saviour; and within Him was the ever growing sense of power to save it, and the growing desire to go and preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind—a growing pity, and compassion, and love; and still He waited. All these feelings and desires—all this intensity of emotion—was pent up within Him, a titanic force. In the case of any other man it would have burst forth and found relief in some premature, and more or less faultily conceived endeavour to regenerate the world. But He had all His feelings and emotions under the

control of that iron Will. He never for even a moment let them get the upper hand. He was never other than complete master of Himself; and, all the time that they grew in strength and intensity, He appeared outwardly so calm that His brethren and kinsfolk never suspected their existence: to them He was only "the carpenter."

And then again, what complete trust in God, and what absolute submission to His Will, this long waiting reveals!

It is marvellous that when His parents found Him in the temple, He should have at once recognised that their claims on Him were, at that time, supreme—that their will was, for the present, God's will for Him—and that He should have at once yielded to them a free and full submission. But it is still more marvellous that, as year after year went by, He should have continued to recognise and respect those claims. Even if, as has been supposed by some, He was compelled by the early death of His father to become the bread-winner of the family, it is not the less surprising that a youth of his genius and spirit should have recognised that path as the path of duty, and should have humbly resigned himself to walk it. Any other youth would in all probability have decided that duty coincided with inclination: would have said then, as *He* said later on, "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? can there be a doubt that my duty to the world is superior to my duty to my family?" *He* saw that the highest duty was the duty which lay nearest to Him—that that was His Father's will for Him—and with resolute submission He set about the

doing of it. With perfect trustfulness He committed Himself to His Father's keeping, confident that the call to higher duty would surely come, when the Father deemed Him ready.

We see here an obedience and a trustfulness displayed, which enable us to understand how He could be obedient unto death; and how He could trust His Father, even when He offered Him Gethsemane's bitter cup.

These are some of the most prominent traits of Character which the fact that He remained silent and in obscurity till He was thirty, justifies us in assigning, if it does not absolutely compel us to assign to Jesus. These silent years speak for Him with an eloquence which no speech can rival: they are too full of meaning for any analysis to be exhaustive. The more they are pondered the more will they reveal a combination of moral and spiritual excellencies so unique, so well balanced, that we are forced to exclaim, "This is perfection; this is nothing else than the beauty and strength, the grace and truth of a faultless Spirit: no Son of Man could more completely demonstrate that He was the Son of God."

## CHAPTER III.

### THE BAPTISM.

(Matt. iii. 13-17, Mark i. 9-11, Luke iii. 21-22.)

THE Baptism of Jesus by John, the account of which is preserved for us in all three Synoptic Gospels,* was a most important event in the life of our Lord. It marks a great crisis in His history.

To go from His quiet home at Nazareth to the new prophet who had appeared beyond Jordan, and who was attracting such multitudes to him, was the first decided step which Jesus took towards the carrying out of His mission: thus first did He actively set about "His Father's business."

We get here the first glimpse of the *Man* Christ Jesus. It is only the third glimpse we get of Him during all those first thirty years. We see Him as a helpless babe: we see Him at the age of twelve a wise, devout, obedient Boy; then we lose sight of Him for eighteen years. Not a single incident of His youth or manhood is recorded, prior to His taking this decided step of leaving His home, and offering Himself to John for baptism.

* John does not explicitly narrate the fact, but it is implied in his account of the Baptist's testimony concerning Jesus (i. 33).

But not only is this event of importance as marking the hour when He emerged from obscurity, and commenced His public career, but also because of the results which it produced on Himself. There is very little doubt that His baptism was the occasion on which He finally resolved to devote Himself to the life of a teacher and reformer. This resolve inevitably sprang from the clear and complete self-knowledge to which He then attained, and from the consciousness of the possession of the gifts which fitted Him for the work, a consciousness which then first came to Him, or more probably, which then first orbed itself to the full.

It was the occasion on which the keystone was fitted to the arch of that perfect Character which had been slowly a-building for thirty years. He received then the crowning gift of the Holy Spirit, or rather entered then upon the *measureless* possession of it. He expanded from a perfect bud into a perfect blossom. Henceforward nothing was lacking to His fully developed and rounded perfection. Henceforward He was the approved, the well-beloved Son; the perfect instrument wherewith the Father could accomplish His mighty purpose—the regeneration of the world: He was the Son of Man who, by a faultless life, an amazing death, and a glorious resurrection could prove Himself to be the Son of God.

This event, then, in the life of Jesus is one which well merits careful consideration. If we can grasp its true significance, we cannot fail to gain some new insight into the Mind and Character of Him, whom His forerunner and baptiser proclaimed to be the

Lamb of God, and who, from that hour, shone with all the unsullied light of the Eternal Life.

There are three points in the narrative on which we may fix attention:—The Baptist and his mission; the effect which the appearance of John as the avowed forerunner of the Messiah produced on Jesus; the baptism and its results.

1. At the beginning of the Christian era there existed a widespread expectation among the Jews that their long-hoped-for Messiah was about to appear.

This expectation was immensely intensified by the appearance of a genuine prophet. No genuine prophetic voice had been heard in the nation for hundreds of years. Four centuries had elapsed since Malachi prophesied, and yet not one strong, original man had in all that time appeared, to speak to the nation in the name of the Lord. The nation during that period had produced many patriots and scholars, but no one fit to lay claim to the mantle of the prophets; no one who could speak with authority and say, "thus saith the Lord."

But now at length such a man appeared—John by name—a man who had for years lived a rigorously ascetic life in the desert, but who yet was well acquainted with the condition of his nation, and could read men accurately. Matthew Arnold's estimate of Goethe may fitly be applied to him:

> "He took the suffering, human race,
> He read each wound, each weakness clear;
> And struck his finger on the place,
> And said, 'Thou ailest here, and here!'"

All classes of the community flocked to Him; multitudes of the common people, publicans, soldiers, even

Pharisees and Sadducees; and to all he delivered the same message :— μετανοεῖτε! "change your minds, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand," and administered the rite of baptism, coupled with practical admonitions as to what change of conduct should follow on this change of mind.

It will be worth while to consider for a moment the true significance of the message which John proclaimed to his countrymen; what he really called on them to do. A clear understanding on this point will, we think, enable us to give a satisfactory answer to the question which has perplexed many minds: "What need was there for Jesus to undergo the baptism of John?" Why should *He* offer Himself as a candidate for "the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins?"

It might indeed be replied that the effects which it evidently produced in Him, or at any rate the results which followed immediately, in His case, on the performance of the rite, are of themselves a sufficient justification of the step He took in coming forward to be baptised. But it will enable us more clearly to understand the reason of His action, as well as to understand what the results of baptism in His case really were, if we gain a clear apprehension of the real nature of John's baptism.

It was, according to the rendering of our English Version: "the baptism of repentance for the [Revised Version "unto"] remission of sins."

Unfortunately, that translation gives not only an inadequate, but a misleading idea of the meaning of the word which was the keynote of John's message; and consequently of the significance of that symbolical

act which he performed on those, who, by the very fact of their being willing to submit to the rite, had presumably taken to heart his word of exhortation.

To repent means, "to look back with sorrow on what has been done amiss;" "to grieve over an act which has rendered you liable to punishment;" and although, because that sorrowful looking back has generally been followed by a change of heart and life, the word has now got associated with it the idea of reformation, yet still the central meaning which attaches to it is, the contemplation of, and sorrow for, what has been done in the past.

Now, the exhortation which John addressed to his countrymen was not, primarily, an exhortation to "repentance" at all, but to "*change of mind.*" It was not, in the main drift of it, an appeal to them to direct their sorrowful attention to what had been sinful in their past lives, but to direct their hopeful attention to, and to get into a state of preparedness for, that coming Event—that great approaching Influence, by which the reformation of their lives would, or could be accomplished. It was not principally a call to look back, but to look forward.

A new revelation of God, he announced, was about to be given to the world—not by himself, he was only a forerunner, his mission was only to proclaim the coming of "One mightier" than he, the latchet of whose shoes, even, he was not worthy to unloose; One who would baptize not with water, but with the Holy Ghost and with fire. And this approaching revelation would throw such a new light upon life,

would so revolutionise their present conceptions of God, and their views of truth, that a *re-formation* of all their thoughts would be absolutely necessary before they could understand it, or be willing to accept it. "Therefore," said he, "you must change your minds; shake yourselves free from old modes of thought, and old views of truth, no less than from old and vicious habits of life; shake yourselves up, and hold yourselves in readiness for this great and unprecedented change; otherwise you will not be able to enter this new kingdom which is about to be established in the world." This was the gist of John's message, and baptism was (or was presumed to be) the sign and pledge of the fact that those who underwent it had accepted that message—had taken to heart his exhortation.

But inasmuch as "repentance" was—in the case of all those he baptized save One—an indispensable preliminary to, if indeed it did not form an essential part of, this "change of mind"; because, in sinful men, the hopeful expectation of becoming members of this new and better moral and social order, the approaching foundation of which John announced, was necessarily accompanied by a regretful looking back on past sins; therefore, it was natural that those who were baptized by John should, undergoing the rite, make confession of sin. And, because those who came to him were continually asking for practical advice—asking "what shall we *do* in order to effect this change of mind, and be ready for the approaching kingdom?"—it was also natural that exhortations to repentance and amendment of life should form part of his teaching. But

still, these features of John's preaching were rather incidental than fundamental to it. The main burden of his cry was not "repent," but "change your minds." "Take a new mind upon you, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;" "and," he added, "show that you have done so, and that you are ready for this new kingdom, by bringing forth fruits worthy of, appropriate to, this change of mind: demonstrate your preparedness in this practical way."

Such an exhortation as this was the exactly appropriate one to precede the coming of the kingdom of heaven. For, as we know, the minds of the men of that generation were full of false and erroneous ideas concerning religion and duty, as also concerning the Messiah whom they were expecting. It was absolutely necessary, therefore, that they should be made ready for His coming by the warning that they must be prepared to shake themselves loose from, and to discard these; otherwise (as indeed was the case with the vast majority) they would be too blind, and too biassed, to recognise, or to accept Him when He actually appeared.

But in the light of these facts concerning the proclamation and the baptism of John, may we not venture the suggestion: That there might be an entire appropriateness in that "One mightier" than the Baptist undergoing the rite at his hands? Might not He, too, require to experience a change of mind—not indeed accompanied by repentance, and issuing in amendment of life, if in His case the ground for these was wanting; but a change to complete His development, and bring Him to rounded perfection; a change

of which the baptism might be the fitting occasion, if not the efficient cause?

We venture to think that this was the case; but before we develop that thought it will be necessary to consider what was the probable condition of the Mind of Jesus at the time when John began to preach; and what was the effect which the appearance of the latter, as the avowed forerunner of the Messiah, produced on Him.

With regard to the latter point: there can be little, if any doubt, that Jesus recognised in the appearance of the Baptist the long expected signal for action. He saw in it the clear call of His Father to leave the workshop in which He had so long toiled—the indication that now at length the long period of silence and self-repression had come to an end, and that the time for Him to be about His Father's business had arrived.

And if we recollect what superhuman strength of will, what power of faith, what completeness of submission to His Father's Will must have been called forth in Him by His years of silent waiting; and realise what He must have learnt by that hard discipline; we shall be able, with some degree of accuracy, to infer the state of His feelings when at length He perceived in the preaching of the Baptist a clear intimation that His hour was come. Not, we may unhesitatingly assert, with the wild exultant feelings of the youth, who—

> "Hears his days before him, and the tumult of his life,"

but with the seriousness and earnestness of ripe manhood; with a joy solemnised by a clear realisation of

the tremendous importance of the step He was about to take, and with an enthusiasm tempered by a deep knowledge of human nature, and sustained by no delusive visions of brilliant success—for His study of the Scriptures must have shown Him how His nation had always treated her prophets and reformers; and He must have known, even before He left home, what His own fate was likely to be—it must have been with such feelings as these that He laid aside His tools, and, from the seclusion of Nazareth, went across the Jordan to Bethabara.

It is not so easy to pronounce with certainty on the exact degree of self-knowledge to which Jesus had attained, at the time when He decided to visit the Baptist. Did He fully and clearly recognise that *He* was the Messiah whose coming the prophet was announcing; or did He simply read the appearance and preaching of the Baptist as the long expected signal for action, without being fully conscious of Himself, and without fully realising the true nature, and the unique importance, of the "business" which His Father was about to entrust to Him? It seems most probable that the latter was the true state of His mind. We can hardly think otherwise without discounting the significance both of the Baptism, and of the Temptation.

It seems most probable that it was the Baptism which fully revealed Him to Himself; that it consummated His development, by placing Him in final possession of that full-orbed consciousness of what He was, which He ever afterwards gave evidence of possessing; and by lifting Him, at the same

time, to that complete consciousness of communion and oneness with His Father which permitted Him henceforward, without shrinking, to claim equality with Him. It seems most probable that it was the baptism also which enabled Him to attain to that clear knowledge of what He had to accomplish, on which He ever afterwards unswervingly acted. Previously to that, though He clearly recognised that He had a special work to do, He could hardly have felt certain that He was the long-expected Messiah; and, though His consciousness of fellowhip with God was (as we have seen) amazingly clear and deep, it could hardly have had that *measurelessness* which belongs to perfect Sonship: otherwise the gift of the Holy Spirit to Him on the occasion of His baptism would have been a superfluous one.

Such then, we conclude, was the state of self-knowledge at which Jesus had arrived at this time; and such were the feelings and anticipations which filled His soul as He journeyed—probably in company with other of His townsfolk—to the place where John was baptizing.

It is hardly likely that Jesus presented Himself immediately for baptism. It is more probable that He remained some little time listening to, and observing the preaching and methods of John; and, possibly, cultivating his acquaintance. This supposition accords with, and explains the fact that (as Matthew records) John was at first unwilling to administer the rite to Him. "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" he said; and it enables us to reconcile this statement with the appa-

rently inconsistent admission of John, recorded in the Fourth Gospel: "I knew Him not." If Jesus remained some time in the Baptist's company before offering Himself for baptism, John must have discerned sufficiently what His Character and endowments were, to feel convinced that he was in the presence of his superior, yet without arriving at the certainty that He was "He who should come." At any rate, it was not until he had administered the rite to Him that John indubitably recognised Him as the Messiah: on Jesus coming up out of the water, "he saw the heavens rent asunder, and the Spirit as a dove descending upon Him; and a voice came out of the heavens: Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased." (Mark i. 10, 11, Revised Version.)

This account of what happened on this occasion brings us face to face with the extremely interesting but difficult question: "were these phenomena of the dove and of the voice subjective impressions, or were they objective realities? Is the language here employed purely symbolical—a figurative mode of setting forth spiritual truth—of describing the spiritual change which the baptism wrought in Jesus, and the recognition of it by John (whereby his previous impression that this must be the Messiah was confirmed); or are we to interpret it literally?"

There is great diversity of opinion among commentators on this question. For our own part we hold firmly to the former alternative. Heaven is economical of miracles; and on an occasion such as this, when neither John nor Jesus needed an objective sign to convince them of the truth, it is not easy to see why

one should have been vouchsafed; while it *is* easy to see how natural the use of figurative language by the narrator is, to describe what occurred.

The baptism accomplished two things: it revealed Jesus to Himself, and it revealed Him to John; and neither of these revelations needed the aid of supernatural phenomena. We have seen what, in all probability, were the results which the eighteen years of silence accomplished in Jesus; we have also seen what were His feelings, and what the degree of His self-knowledge, when He set out from Nazareth. We can readily understand, therefore, that such an impressive ceremony as that of public baptism (for which Jesus could not have volunteered without deep and earnest reflection, and such solemn resolves as were in harmony with His Mind and Character), would accomplish in Him just that final self-revelation, and that consummation of His fellowship with God, which He needed in order to complete His development: it would place Him in the possession of the clear knowledge that He was the beloved Son, in whom the Father was well pleased, and to whom He had entrusted the Office and Work of the Messiah.

And we can also readily understand that when John —who, we must remember, had been previously struck, even awed, by the majesty and grace displayed in His face and mien (and perhaps in His conversation), saw Him in all the added glory of that spiritual exaltation which He betrayed at the moment when the rite was performed—a spiritual exaltation necessarily resulting from that self-revelation, and God-revelation, which came to His soul at that

moment, which is described in the narrative as the descent of the Spirit upon Him, and which could not but betray itself in His looks and mien—he could not help being impressed by the change—could not help having his previous surmise changed into the conviction, that this was indeed "He who should come." And all this we can conceive of as happening, without need arising for the occurrence of anything supernatural to produce, or to endorse, either the conviction of the one, or the heightened consciousness of the other.

But at any rate, whether there were, on this occasion any supernatural phenomena or not,* it is certain that the chief interest and importance of the narrative centres in the spiritual occurrences which took place; to which physical signs and tokens, if vouchsafed, could have been, at least, merely supplementary. We are far from saying that if either John or Jesus had required any such physical phenomena to confirm their spiritual impressions, these would not have been vouchsafed: we are only arguing that they did not require them. John must have been able to discern the grace, and beauty, and majesty of the Man whom he baptized, without the aid of any physical sign: Jesus must have been able to arrive at that final self-knowledge, and God-knowledge which He needed, in order to complete His development, and to arrive at rounded perfection, without the help of an audible voice from heaven. That John did recognise that Jesus was in-

* The attempts to find a via media between these alternatives, by deeming the phenomena objective but natural [*i.e.*, the dove, a flight of pigeons, the voice, thunder] cannot be regarded as at all satisfactory.

dubitably the Messiah; and that Jesus did experience that final expansion of consciousness which He required to undergo, both in order to become, and to know Himself as the perfect and well-beloved Son:—these facts we hold to be indisputable, and these constitute the kernel of the narrative.

And now let us see whether, in the light of these facts concerning the condition of the Mind of Jesus prior to, and subsequent to, His baptism; and in the light of the real nature of the baptism of John, which we have been endeavouring to unfold, we cannot give a satisfactory answer to the question: Why did Jesus present Himself to John for baptism?

If it is true that Jesus Himself required to undergo a "change of mind" before He could be fully prepared for His work; if He required an expansion of consciousness, inward and Godward, in order to complete His "growth in wisdom and stature"; if before He could reach the topmost height of perfection, and be Himself the perfect embodiment of that changed state of heart, and mind, and life to which He was destined to lead mankind, He needed to receive the crowning gift of the Holy Spirit without measure; and if, as is probable, if not certain, He felt when He went to the Baptist that He needed some such "change of mind" as this:—then it was most natural that He should seek to be baptized of him.

It was most appropriate too, that He who was to accomplish that mighty revolution in the world's thought and life, which John proclaimed as about to commence through the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven, should Himself receive His final preparation

for His work, in the same way as His brethren were being prepared for it:—that His Mind and Spirit should pass through that *last* stage of development which was necessary in order to bring Him to perfection, by means of that same outward act, whereby those whom He was about to save, entered on the *first* stage of that change which was to lead them to like-mindedness with Himself.

There was of course this great difference between the effect of the baptism on Him, and its effect on the rest: in His case it was the occasion of—was synchronous with—the final process of His wonderful *evolution*: in theirs it signified primarily—when it had any true significance at all—not evolution but *revolution*, a crisis which it was necessary for them to undergo before evolution on the lines of His life could begin. He only needed to be baptized in order to expand into the fully opened flower of Ideal Manhood: they needed the rite as a pledge, which bound them to begin that long and laborious process of "being saved," in the course of which all their thoughts and feelings would gradually undergo reconstruction, and be brought into harmony with His. He needed it in order that—without conflict and travail—He might pass from the incomplete to the complete fulness of His being: they needed it in order that they might be in a position to place themselves at the starting point of the line of march which extends to "the measure of the stature of His fulness."

But though there were these important differences between Him and them, both He and they needed to "change their minds"; and so it was

most appropriate that He, as well as they, should be baptized with the baptism of change of mind—He in order that He might become the perfected leader of that great change: they that they might get into a position to accept His leadership. Thus moreover was it demonstrated that "both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one"—all brethren of the common Father.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE FIRST TEMPTATION.

(Matt. iv. 1-4; Mark i. 12, 13; Luke iv. 1-4.)

MUCH has been written on the Temptation: so much that it is impossible, in dealing with the subject, to avoid some repetition of what has often been said before.

But no attempt to unfold the Character of Jesus can be regarded as satisfactory which ignores such an important incident in His life, and one which, moreover, opens such a vista into the depths of His Spirit.

Perhaps, too, if we keep steadily in view the aim which we have set before ourselves in these pages —not to assume, but, by careful synthesis, to unfold the perfection which He displayed, and thus to lead the reader to apprehend the fulness of grace and truth which dwelt in Him—we shall be led to regard the subject from a point of view which, though not new, is not one which has been ordinarily assumed; a hasty glance at it from this point of view being all that the majority of writers seem to have given.

The Temptation is recorded by all the synoptists as having taken place immediately after the Baptism. No great stress can, as a rule, be laid on the order of events in the narratives, the method which the Evan-

gelists adopted not being that of chronological arrangement. But in this case there can be no hesitation in accepting the sequence, for such a spiritual wrestling as is here portrayed was bound to be the sequel to such a spiritual expansion as we have seen the Baptism to have occasioned.

Jesus, we have seen, at His baptism perfected His development. He received the crowning gift of the Spirit; He attained to the clear conviction that He was the Messiah; He entered into the fulness of the consciousness of His Sonship, and of fellowship with the Father. And this heightened consciousness inevitably brought with it the sense of *power*—not merely the power to work miracles, but the consciousness of having limitless means at His command whereby He might accomplish His purposes—power to sway men, and to master circumstances, as well as power to control, or make use of, natural forces. He could not become fully conscious of Himself, and attain to complete self-knowledge, far less could He attain to the consciousness of perfect fellowship with God, without becoming conscious, to a supreme degree, of the dominion to which He could lay claim.

But such an expansion of consciousness of necessity brought Him face to face with tremendous difficulties. To know that He was the Messiah, appointed by God to establish His kingdom in the world; and to feel that so far as His power was concerned, He was quite unrestricted in His choice of methods—that all paths were open to Him—inevitably led Him to the question: what method shall I adopt, what path shall I choose? He was bound to define a plan before He commenced

His work; He was bound to weigh the alternatives; and how difficult to discern what was the wisest and best method! How difficult to make a final decision, with so many paths open, and so much dependent on His choice!

The narrative of the Temptation, then, records just such a mental and spiritual struggle as we should have expected Jesus to have gone through at this stage of His career. It is impossible to suppose that He could have decided upon the wonderful plan of action which He unswervingly followed during the remainder of His life, instantaneously, without long meditation, and much conflict. The alternatives to that plan were numerous, and the reasons for their adoption weighty: not till they had been deeply pondered could they reveal themselves in their true aspects—as temptations of the Evil One—and be rejected as such.

Viewed in this light the Temptation is seen to be a natural—an inevitable event in the life of Jesus. It is the record of that mental and spiritual travail which such an One, called to such a work, was bound to undergo, in process of arriving at a final decision concerning His future course of action. It is the record of how, by the elimination from His thoughts of seductive but unwise, and, in their essence, immoral alternatives, He attained at last to clearness of vision—was able to see unmistakably what was the one right and best path to follow, and resolved to tread it.

This we regard as the truest and most significant aspect in which to view the narrative. Doubtless there are other aspects in which it can be viewed. The con-

densed and parabolic form in which His experiences at this time are recorded, is capable of expansion in many directions, and of interpretation in many ways. No analysis can completely lay bare the universe of thought and feeling which lies hidden behind the brief outline which alone the Evangelists have sketched for us. But we are confident that, in regarding the story as the record of a mental and spiritual conflict, which resulted from the confirmed conviction of His Messiahship, and which centred on the question: how could He best accomplish the work which His Father had given Him to do? we are regarding it in its central aspect, and in one the contemplation of which enables us, with no uncertain voice, to testify concerning the Mind and Spirit of the Master.

What has been said above will indicate to the reader the view we adopt with regard to the *form* of the narrative of the Temptation. We hold strongly to the opinion that it cannot be regarded otherwise than as a summarised and pictorial representation of a travail of Spirit which Jesus underwent at this period of His career.

Of course it is quite possible that external objects, and incidents unknown to us, may have played a part therein; but it seems more likely that the experience was wholly a spiritual one, which Jesus Himself narrated to His disciples in the parabolic form in which it has come down to us, in order to bring it within the range of their intelligence. The author of "Ecce Homo" acutely observes that the account could only have come from Jesus Himself; and it was quite in accordance with His method of representing spiritual

things, for Him to narrate His experiences, not in "closest words," but "embodied in a tale."

This view of the matter, though strongly condemned by many thoughtful and learned writers, has the support of so many no less thoughtful and learned, that the weight of authority, at any rate, cannot be urged against it. Opinion on the subject is so hopelessly divided, that each thoughtful student of the Scriptures must have liberty accorded him to form his own judgment.

It is by no means necessary, however, to decide this question either one way or the other, before apprehending, and in order rightly to apprehend, the true significance of the narrative. Even those who hold most strongly to its literal truthfulness, admit that it is not in the form, but in the spiritual experiences portrayed thereby, that the interest centres.

Whether Satan appeared to our Lord in bodily presence or not, and whether he actually adopted the methods recorded, in order to seduce His Soul, are questions which can be very well left open ones. The intrinsic significance of the narrative lies in the fact that it tells us how, immediately after His Baptism, Jesus was brought face to face with the question: which of the alternative methods of action which were open to Him ought He to adopt; which of the various uses to which He could put the power entrusted to Him ought He to choose? And it records how He faced and answered that question.

The narrative reveals Him steadily, with unerring wisdom, and with indomitable Will, rejecting those methods and practices which sprang from the root of

selfishness, or which savoured of rashness, or which were lacking in the elements of perfect stability. These rejected, the one hard, perfect path which He actually trod alone lay open to Him; and He chose it.

It is when viewed in this light that the narrative best enables us to read clearly the Character of Jesus, and in this light we purpose now to examine it more in detail.

The form in which the first Temptation is recorded may possibly be not entirely parabolic. It may at any rate have been suggested by Jesus' actual experience in the wilderness.

It is quite natural to suppose that, after His Baptism He may have remained oblivious to the needs of the body—lost in soaring thought, and in meditation on the future—until the pangs of hunger became too keen to be ignored; and it is quite possible that then the Temptation as recorded may have presented itself to His mind.

Too much stress, however, cannot be laid on the literalness even of this first Temptation. It is more probable that Jesus narrated His experience to His disciples in this concrete form, not because this was the form which it had actually assumed with Him, but because in that form He could best summarise His travail of Spirit, and best enable His disciples to apprehend what it had been. And at any rate, if this was the form in which it actually came to Him, it could only have been the accident of His circumstances at the time which led it to assume that form. The great problem in His mind *may* have narrowed itself to a point in some such way as this, when He became conscious of

His physical needs; but it could not have been merely His sense of physical need which suggested the problem, and which gave an opening for the Temptation.

For we can plainly see that there is a great principle involved in the question, whether He should or should not turn stones into bread, in order to satisfy His hunger. It was merely a concrete form in which the great problem took shape: would it be allowable for Him, under any circumstances, to use on His own behalf the power which He felt that He possessed? Might He "save Himself," or did His work demand such a complete denial of Self that, even in the matter of pressing bodily needs—even when it became a question of life or death—He must rigidly and absolutely refuse to put forth His power? That was a problem which Jesus was bound to face and to solve before He entered on His work. And wise, and unselfish, and unambitious as He was, it could not have been easy for Him to find the right solution to it.

There were many weighty, as well as many plausible reasons, why He should not absolutely prohibit Himself such a use of His power. How could He otherwise overcome the opposition with which He was sure to meet: how could He otherwise even hope to escape an untimely death, before His Father's business was half accomplished?

The problem indeed was indissolubly connected with, and formed part of, that larger one, out of which all the Temptations issued: the problem as to the way in which He was to set about His work. His decision —not under any circumstances to use His power selfishly—involved the rejection of many possible

plans of action. It bound Him to a life of toil; it diminished, if it did not virtually annihilate, His chance of having what the world would call "a successful career"; it marked out the way to the Cross.

When we recognise the principle involved in this Temptation—the tremendous question at issue in it, and the difficulties to be overcome before a right decision could be arrived at—we are almost forced to the conclusion that the narrative in the gospels is no other than a figurative presentation of a mighty travail of Spirit which Jesus underwent—a travail which is concentrated in the narrative into a single suggestion and reply, because these are sufficient to reveal clearly the great principle at stake, and our Lord's final decision, but which we cannot suppose to have been either so short, or so *effortless*, as the narrative, at first sight, would lead us to imagine.

We are almost forced to the conclusion that the Temptation—"If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones become bread"—is no more than the briefest condensation of the floods of thought which poured through His mind as He meditated on the work His Father had given Him to do; and more particularly as He debated the question: whether, under any circumstances, the use of His power on His own behalf would be permissible; or whether, casting Himself entirely on His Father's care, He must tread the path of perfect self-denial, and make no attempts to "save Himself."

We are far from suggesting that this question presented itself to Him in any forms incompatible with that divine perfection which we have already seen that

He possessed. We hold most strongly that the light which the previous incidents we have considered throws on His Character, as well as the light which this narrative of His Temptation affords, reveals Him as a Man "without sin." It is difficult —it is perhaps even impossible—for us to conceive accurately how such an One was "in all points tempted like as we are"—what forms of the Temptation we are considering, for instance, *were* compatible with a perfectly pure and holy Spirit, and what were incompatible. A sin-biassed mind can hardly conceive of such a Temptation, except under forms which betray its bias. We dare not venture, therefore, to do more than hint at the nature of the travail which Jesus underwent at this time. We content ourselves with pointing out that it *was a travail*—that the Temptation could hardly have presented itself to Him in the brief and simple form in which it is recorded—that He was bound to look at the problem in all its many aspects and bearings; and that He could not have found its solution easily, without doubt and hesitation; without, moreover, an assault being made upon His Will, which tested its divine steadfastness, and loyalty to the highest duty.

This brief attempt to unfold the inner meaning of the Temptation we are considering—to show what lies behind, and is implied in, the simple record of the gospels—is an attempt which it was necessary to make. No exposition of the Man called Jesus, which did not include such an attempt, could be regarded as complete. Whether entirely successful or not, it will have served its purpose if, in any degree, it enables

the reader to see Him more clearly, to realise His situation more vividly, and to surmise what were the thoughts of His heart.

But it is not by regarding the narrative from this point of view that we can gain, through it, the deepest insight into the Mind of the Master. It is not the fact that He underwent a mighty travail of spirit, which is of chief importance for us to note, but the outcome of the travail—the birth which resulted from it.

Many another man has had a similar travail on the eve of taking a decisive step in life; but where can we point to any other man who formed such a resolution as He formed; who gained such a victory as He gained? His subsequent career entirely confirms this brief record of the resolution then formed, the victory then gained. Throughout His life He steadfastly refused to make use of His power to save Himself—would speak no word to avoid hunger, or toil, or weariness; would summon no angels to His aid, though ten legions were at His command; would not even come down from the Cross and confound His taunting enemies, though it lay entirely within the power of His volition to do so.

What are we to think of the Man who not only was able to conceive such a plan of divine self-abnegation and self-restraint, but who was able to resolve on its adoption, and to carry it out! What divine wisdom is this, which can discern that the world's Helper must be, as regards Himself, helpless; that He who had power to heal the sick, and raise the dead, must wholly consecrate that power to the service of others, and, for His own part, rely entirely on the natural providence

of God! What divine wisdom is this, which can discern that the Messiah's mission can only be rightly accomplished by a complete κένωσις—by a life wholly confined to the ordinary conditions of humanity——which can discern that the completest revelation of God cannot be given in a life which rests the main proof of its divinity on the manifestation of overwhelming power and authority, but in a life of perfect self-sacrifice and love! It is the truth; now He has lived that Life we can see that it is the truth: but whence came the wisdom which could recognise it to be the truth, in an age which regarded the manifestation of supernatural power as the chief evidence of the presence of God, and which expected the Messiah to appear as a conquering king?

And if the wisdom displayed in such a conception is divine, what shall we say concerning the resolution to live such a life—to adopt such a course of action? What self-denial, what self-control, what strength of will, what amazing faith it implies! What an entire absence of selfishness too; what a knowledge of the Heart and Will of His Father; what a ready and complete obedience! When once the problem became clear to Him; when He discerned that any attempt to make use of His powers on His own behalf would be inconsistent with the spirit of the Life of His Father, God, and would prevent Him from clearly proclaiming His Name, and revealing His Nature; when, consequently, He recognised that all those considerations which seemed to favour such a course of action were in reality temptations of the evil one; there is no trace of hesitation—of unwillingness to make that supreme

renunciation of self—or of fear, lest, having resolved, He should not have strength to tread that difficult path. With Him, to see what was the highest duty, the divinest life, was alone necessary, was of itself sufficient, to make Him resolve to live it. The Word of God came to Him at length, after long travail in the wilderness, telling Him clearly how He ought to shape His life—what degree of self-renunciation His Messiahship necessitated; and immediately, without demur, without a thought of disobeying, by that Word He resolved to live.

Is the wisdom here displayed in any respect less than divine? Does the Spirit here displayed in any respect fall short of perfection? Is it possible to conceive of a more Godlike Son of Man?

## CHAPTER V.

### THE SECOND TEMPTATION.

(Matt. iv. 5-7; Luke iv. 9-12.)

THERE can be hardly any doubt that the Second Temptation (we follow the order of Matthew) resulted naturally from the rejection of the first. The narrative of it records how Jesus successfully wrestled with a new problem, which inevitably presented itself to His mind immediately that the previous one had been solved. The form in which it is recorded is doubtless purely parabolic, but it embodies a spiritual experience which, after the resolution He had formed to make no use of His power on His own behalf—to rely wholly on the natural providence of God, Jesus was bound to undergo.

For, having come to such a resolution, it became necessary for Him to determine accurately what were the limits of that filial confidence which He had resolved to exercise; whether it entirely absolved Him from the duty of taking any steps, under any circumstances, to "save Himself"—at what point trustfulness became rashness; to what extent prudence and foresight should supplement faith, so that, by avoiding circumstances and methods which would lead to unnecessary danger, He might also avoid subjecting His Father's wise care and holy love to an illegitimate test.

A most necessary question to answer, and a most difficult one—one which we cannot imagine that He succeeded in answering without much meditation and travail of Spirit. Previously to this time such a problem could hardly have presented itself to His mind. His service had been to stand and wait. His filial confidence had thereby been tested to the full, but for that very reason the question as to how far faith ought to be supplemented by action—to what extent He ought to help Himself while, as before, relying on Heaven to help Him, could hardly have been an urgent one. But now that His Father called on Him no longer passively to wait, but to engage actively in the work of the Messiah; now, too, especially, when He had taken His first great decision with regard to the way in which He must set about that work, He was bound to face that question: He could not think out a perfect plan of action without answering it.

It is a question which (it is hardly necessary to remark) only presents itself to those who have strong faith. But to such it is bound to present itself at some time or other: and most difficult it is to find the right answer to it. It is most difficult for such souls on the one hand to avoid the dangers of quietism, and, on the other, those arising from a confidence which presumes too much, and is more rash than wise. It is most difficult for faith to avoid leaving either too much in God's hands, or too little—either relying on the intervention of Providence as a substitute for action, or taking such action as cannot without that intervention justify itself. Jesus must have been tempted to go to

both these extremes. The inevitable result of the victory He had just won was, that it produced a reaction in the direction of faith; it forced on Him the question, whether it was necessary to supplement His Father's care for Him by any carefulness of His own. At the same time His intense desire to be about His Father's business must have prompted Him to ask what risks He might legitimately run, what situations of danger He might place Himself in without tempting God. The question was one which concerned equally the limits of His action, and the extent of His passion —how far His filial confidence demanded and justified the one and the other, and in what relations. In the course of determining this most difficult question many suggestions must have come to Him which only by degrees revealed themselves to Him as unwise, and unworthy of His high calling; suggestions which, consequently, He could only gradually, and through much travail of spirit unmask, and come to see in their true light as temptations of the evil one. What these suggestions actually were we can only very dimly surmise. But in the words: "If Thou be the Son of God cast Thyself down, for it is written: He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee," there is no doubt that we have the conflict accurately summarised; and they enable us clearly to see the point on which it centred. We can see that the very strength and purity of His faith, proved by the issue of the previous conflict, placed Him in danger of relying, either too presumptuously or too exclusively, on the aid of God. Not easily could He have determined what was the perfect line of action; that, namely, in which self-help and

faith, action and passion, met in equilibrium and mutually supplemented each other. Not easily could He have decided how to shape His life so that danger and death might be neither courted nor shunned. His work demanded the exercise of the greatest prudence; it also demanded the exhibition of the greatest boldness; it demanded a walk so circumspect that His Father's intervention on His behalf would be unnecessary, at the same time that it demanded a confident reliance on God so absolute as to enable Him, when the time was ripe, to throw Himself into the arms of death, with the clear knowledge that He would not, by any supernatural intervention, be saved from the consequences of such an act.

This we conceive to have been the real nature of this second Temptation, and it may be noted that the Gospels record several occasions in our Lord's subsequent career in which the results of such a travail and victory seem to manifest themselves. Thus we find that Jesus withdrew to a desert place on hearing of the death of John. Though more than one motive seems to have influenced Him in taking this step, there is little doubt that one reason was His desire not to expose Himself at that time to a similar fate.

Again: "He would not walk in Judæa because the Jews sought to kill Him." (John vii. 1.) On both of these occasions He recognised that to expose Himself to danger would be to tempt God.

On the other hand we read: "It came to pass when the days were well nigh come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." And again, when the Pharisees came to

Him saying, "Get thee out and go hence, for Herod would fain kill thee," He refused to swerve from His course, though He knew that He was going to certain death. These facts harmonise with and endorse the Temptation narrative. They show how perfectly He succeeded in shaping His path so as to avoid tempting God, by placing Himself in situations of unnecessary danger, as long as He saw that God required Him to live and work; and yet how boldly, when He saw that God's Will for Him was that He should suffer and die, He committed Himself to His Father's keeping, and plunged into the jaws of death.

The foregoing reflections compel us to note once more the marvellous and unerring wisdom which Jesus displayed during these spiritual wrestlings in the wilderness. The demands of faith do not blind Him in the least to the demands of reverence; reverence both for Himself, and for His Father. He discerns clearly and accurately the extent to which His filial confidence needs to be supplemented by respect for the natural resources, which His Father has placed at His command—that any reliance on His Father which ignores or neglects these, is inconsistent with a sober faith. Such a sobriety, in combination with such a confidence, is altogether unique—unsurpassable; we can confidently assert that such a balance of mind as is here revealed in no respect falls short of perfection.

But, as with the first Temptation, so with this, the record is precious not chiefly on this account, but because of the insight it gives us into the Spirit of the Master. We could not indeed do full justice to the narrative, without drawing attention to the evidence it

affords of Jesus' matchless wisdom; but we should do it far less than justice did we not further draw attention to the fact that what it records is a *spiritual struggle and victory;* not merely the triumphant solution of a difficult intellectual problem. That Jesus on this occasion was brought face to face with such a problem, and that He was completely successful in finding its solution, is, we hold, plainly implied in the narrative. And the wisdom which enabled Him to discern which of the suggestions which came to Him, as He grappled with the difficulties which beset His path, were masked temptations of the evil one, was, without doubt, one essential element of His divine perfection.

But we require evidence that He was the possessor of much else besides a consummate wisdom, before we can pronounce His perfection divine, and hail Him as the Son of God. Wisdom to discern the right and perfect path does not necessarily involve and imply power and willingness to follow it. What was His spiritual attitude throughout this conflict? that is the all-important question. Did He display any signs of spiritual weakness; did He evince any hesitation in accepting the Will of God, when He saw clearly what that Will was; did He stand firm against the temptation to tempt God by outstepping the limits of a sober faith, or did He waver? To these questions the narrative enables us to give an unhesitating answer. It brings clearly before us, and emphasises, precisely that feature of the conflict which it is most essential that we should recognise—precisely those characteristics in Jesus of which it is most essential that we should be

assured—precisely those spiritual qualities which demonstrate Him to be the divine Son. We *infer* His wisdom; we *see* His spiritual perfection.

The narrative portrays Him as resolutely, unwaveringly refusing to tempt God; there is no hesitation, no dallying with the temptation; the act of rejecting it follows instantaneously on the act of recognising it.

Doubtless He suffered being tempted—suffered in this struggle even more than in the previous one, since the natural impulse which He was compelled to restrain was, in this case, a purely spiritual one, and for such a Man as He was, it must have been harder to keep within bounds the promptings of His faith, urging Him to temerity, than those which urged Him to "save Himself."

But though we are bound to believe that He suffered in this temptation—that His obedience, and submission to the will of God were put to the test by it—that it required a mighty effort of self-repression to conquer it, and necessitated a resolute rejection of methods which He might well have deemed it not only wise, but imperative to adopt, after the resolve He had just taken—for the question must have presented itself to Him, "Can I rely too absolutely in the power of God, since I have resolved not to use my own?"—yet the narrative gives us clearly to understand that the issue was never in doubt. There is not the slightest trace of any inclination to yield to the temptation. His will is absolutely fixed in its loyalty to duty, so absolutely fixed that the resolve not to tempt God *seems* to come without effort, and only a

careful analysis of the situation enables us to realize that it was the outcome of a conflict.

But it is just this apparent absence of effort which is the clearest indication of His spiritual perfection. What language can do justice to the quality of a Spirit so divinely strong and holy, that it can dismiss such a temptation as this without a trace of struggle? What language can do justice to a balance of nature so perfect, and so stable, that two such assaults on it as we have been contemplating recoil from it without disturbing its equilibrium? Self-denials and resolves to which other men only attain by dint of mighty struggles, and after many failures—if it is possible to compare the noblest self-denial, and mightiest resolves of other men with these of His—He makes with ease! Duties which to other men seem hard, if not impossible, He unhesitatingly accepts the moment they become clear to Him—accepts as calmly and simply as a child accepts the proffered hand of his father!

Is it not sublime—this calm strength of will which, even in conflict, seems to be in repose? Is it not godlike—this perfect beauty of holiness which His Spirit displays? How can we name Him, so as to give Him His due rank in the creation, except by calling Him the Son of God?

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE THIRD TEMPTATION.

(Matt. iv. 8-11; Luke iv. 5-8.)

THE interest of the Temptation narrative culminates, and the meaning and significance of the entire record is most clearly revealed, in the account which is given us of our Lord's third Temptation. It furnishes us with the key to the whole of these spiritual wrestlings in the wilderness; it enables us to see the point on which they all centred. And just because it does this, it affords us the clearest evidence concerning the Mind and Spirit of Him who was so tempted, and who conquered such a Temptation. Victory over such a Temptation meant complete victory all along the line. The powers of evil exhausted themselves in this last attempt to seduce His soul. Henceforward, if He was to be troubled at all again, it could only be by the recurrence of such suggestions as He had already fully considered and rejected—not by the intrusion of any new and uncontemplated ones. And meanwhile, for the present, all doubt and hesitation vanished when the great resolution, which is recorded in this Temptation, was taken—when this third spiritual fight was fought and won. Peace and joy, confidence and assurance, took possession of His Spirit. In the

language of the narrative, "Then the devil leaveth Him; and behold, angels came and ministered unto Him."

We have already pointed out that the whole of that mental and spiritual travail which the Temptation narrative records, arose from the necessity Jesus felt Himself to be under of deciding what must be His future course of action, in view of the fact that God had called Him to the work of the Messiah. And in considering the previous temptations we have attempted to show that they were suggestions which came to Him in the course of His endeavour to decide this difficult question.

But in the first two Temptations the main issue was not directly before Him, but only lay in the background. Before He could come face to face with that, He was obliged to grapple with some of the preliminary difficulties—to decide certain personal questions, which most naturally first presented themselves to His mind, and which, if left unanswered, would render a decision on the main question impossible.

It is quite possible, indeed, that we are not justified in dividing the Temptations so sharply from one another as they appear to be divided in the narrative. The experiences of the three were, as likely as not, interwoven; and our Lord, in narrating them to His disciples, may have narrated as a sequence, and drawn a distinction between, the various features of an experience which, in fact, was only one great spiritual fight.

Be that as it may, it is certain that in the third Temptation we are introduced to the heart of the

conflict, and contemplate, in the outcome, the crowning victory.

It is true that, coming to it after we have considered the other two, we are led to confidently anticipate, and almost cease to be surprised at, that outcome. We feel that the Man who refused to make a selfish use of His power, or to permit His faith to lead Him to any act of rashness or presumption, was no more than true to Himself, when He rejected the temptation to found an earthly kingdom, and resolved to found a spiritual one. And doubtless any other decision—any other termination to the Temptation than this—would have been wholly inconsistent with the Character and Spirit which we have seen Him hitherto to have displayed. Nevertheless, because human nature does frequently display such an inconsistency, the importance, and the merit, of the victory He gained over this Temptation is in no wise minimised by these considerations. He could not have proved Himself the strong and perfect Son of God, if He had not conquered in this last fight; but the fact that He did conquer—that He was able to give this utmost proof of His strength and perfection—is none the less wonderful and unique.

Let us, however, before we say more on this point, consider more particularly the nature of this third Temptation, and what is implied in His rejection of it.

After what has been previously said concerning the form of the narrative, it is hardly necessary to remark, that we regard the account given of this Temptation as being no less parabolic than the others. Those who maintain most strenuously that the narrative should be

accepted in all its literalness, admit that it is impossible to understand how the devil could show Him "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them" ("in a moment of time," Luke adds), even though the mountain to which he took Him was "exceeding high."

But the explanation we have previously given of the narrative, renders it as needless as the poet admits it is fruitless to inquire,

> "By what strange parallax or optic skill
> Of vision, multiplied through air, or glass
> Of telescope,"

such a feat was accomplished.

The experience was an inward one. Our Lord simply narrated it in this parabolic form (and we cannot too highly admire the vividness of the picture He draws, or the skill with which He portrays all the essential features of this spiritual struggle of His, in a few brief sentences) to suit the apprehension of His hearers, and also, without doubt, because He knew that in this form it was much more likely to be remembered. Let us not cling too closely to the letter which killeth; let us endeavour to grasp the spirit of the narrative.

There can be no doubt that the Temptation arose in the course of His meditation on what, as we have said, was the main question before Him during His retirement in the wilderness:—the question: What kind of a kingdom ought the kingdom of heaven on earth to be?

That it was a *kingdom* which God, in appointing Him to the work of the Messiah, required Him to

establish—a kingdom, not a school, or a sect—He could hardly have doubted. The voices of the prophets, the proclamation of John, and the expectations of His nation alike pointed to the adoption of that plan. And, bearing in mind the nature of these expectations, as well as the character of the great majority of the prophecies, the wonder is, not that the Temptation to found an earthly kingdom came to Him, but that He should have hesitated at all to adopt that plan —that He should have seen it to be a temptation at all. Did not the Scriptures again and again foretell that the Messiah would come as a conquering king? Was not His nation eagerly expecting His appearing, and was it not prepared to respond enthusiastically to His summons to arms?

Not that those things which make kingship attractive in the eyes of most men—wealth, and pomp, and power—could have appeared attractive to Him. His pure and unselfish Spirit could not have deemed kingship desirable on account of any such things as these. It must have been the opportunities which sovereignty presented for abolishing tyranny and injustice, and for establishing a reign of righteousness and peace on the earth, which could alone have given weight to such a plan in His estimation, and which gave power to the Temptation. But, bearing that in mind, we can readily understand how real and powerful the Temptation was. The consideration was one which could not lightly be set aside, that by conquering the world He would be able to establish a righteous rule in it. And besides, by placing Himself "In that fierce light which beats upon a

throne," would He not be able, better than anywhere else, to reveal the Name and Nature of God to men? Not easily could He have discerned this suggestion to be a Temptation of the evil one; not easily could He have resolved to dismiss this dream of earthly dominion; to run counter to the expectations of His nation; and to choose a path which (He must have seen) could hardly end otherwise than in His rejection and death.

It is impossible to do justice to the wisdom which Jesus displayed in recognising that these suggestions which came to Him, prompting Him to found an earthly kingdom, were Temptations of the devil. It is impossible to do justice to the splendid originality of the idea which He conceived, of founding a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men. It is impossible to do justice to those qualities of Spirit which He displayed when He rejected the tempting alternative, and boldly resolved to found such a spiritual kingdom in the world.

In the light of the realised conception—now that the kingdom He resolved to found has become a fact, we can see how incomparably superior, in every respect to the plan which He rejected, was the one which He adopted.

We can see that if He had attempted to found an earthly kingdom, though He certainly would have succeeded, He would have had to make use of means which would have degraded both Him and His Father in the eyes of men, and instruments which, as He rightly discerned, were the devil's tools. We can see that such a kingdom, when founded, would have lacked

the elements of permanency; like the empire of Alexander, it would have fallen to pieces when its founder was removed. We can see moreover that the attempt to establish the reign of justice and righteousness by force, could not have succeeded, since the wisest laws, and the strictest justice, can do little more than restrain evil; they are powerless to annihilate it, because its source is the corrupt heart of man.

We can see that the method He adopted was the one perfect method by which an everlasting kingdom could be established; the one perfect method by which, while God's Name and Nature could be fully manifested, man's heart and life could be transformed, and the serpent-head of evil crushed.

We can see this now; but, how divinely wise must He have been, to see it at a time when the world had never dreamt of such a spiritual kingdom as this; when Scripture only vaguely hinted at it, and when the whole current of popular opinion ran counter to it! It is impossible to point to anything which mars the absolute clear-sightedness of a Mind which could thus discern that God's kingdom could not be established by force, and that the reasons which favoured such a method were, in reality, deadly temptations of the evil one; a Mind too, which could track the world's evil to its source, and which could successfully devise a plan for overcoming it.

We do but scant justice to our Lord's conception of the kingdom of heaven, when we call it the most splendidly original idea which has ever shaped itself in the mind of man. Its audacity is as conspicuous as its originality.

Think what it meant! "I will not conquer the world by force; I will not establish the reign of righteousness on a basis of fear; I will draw men away from evil by means of the superior attractiveness of goodness; I will draw them to Me by the power of a holy and self-sacrificing life; I will reveal the whole of My Father's heart to them; I will compel them to love and serve Him, by convincing them that He is infinitely worthy of being loved and served; I will manifest the eternal life of Sonship to them; I will show them that such a life is possible; I will reveal its glories; I will lift them up to it by winning their love, and thus securing their loyalty, and their utmost devotion to Me and my Father."

What a stupendous conception! what an audacious resolve! One knows not what to admire and wonder at most;—the splendid originality of the idea; or the amazing self-confidence, and the equally amazing God-confidence, and, still further, the marvellous confidence in human nature implied in the resolve; or yet again, the indomitable strength of will, and the perfect obedience, which He displayed in His rejection of the tempting alternative, and in His unhesitating acceptance of what He saw to be the right and best path.

What are we to think of the Man who could dare to think of founding such a spiritual kingdom as this; who could dare to resolve to cast Himself defenceless on the world, and to fight its gigantic evils with no other weapons than those of the Spirit—the weapons of truthfulness, meekness, purity, self-sacrifice, and love; who could dare to hope that by sacrificing Him-

self utterly for the world's sake, He could win the world; *and who succeeded?*

What are we to think of the Man who saw that all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them were within His grasp—that He had only to make the choice, and adopt the fitting means, and a world-wide dominion would be His—and who would not make the choice, would not adopt the means, but chose instead the way of the Cross; chose the hard and thankless task of teaching, and ministering to, and living a divine life in the midst of, an effete, faithless, and perverse nation; chose a life of toil, weariness, and poverty—and death at thirty-three!

Truly, in the light of these facts and considerations, this Man stands revealed as so divinely wise, and strong, and holy, that the difficulty in the way of accepting Him as the express image of the Divine Being lies, not in the fact that His Character does not display all those combined perfections which our clearest ideas, and deepest intuitions, and most passionate longings prompt us to assign to the Most High; but that it manifests a beauty of holiness and a fulness of grace and truth which so far exceeds these—it shines with a light so pure and dazzling—that the announcement which He made to His disciples: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," seems well-nigh too good to be true.

We do not claim in the foregoing pages to have given an exhaustive analysis of the Temptation narrative; nor do we pretend to have done full justice to the Character of Jesus as it stands revealed thereby. The

glimpses it gives us into His Mind and Spirit are glimpses into depths too deep to fathom; they reveal a boundless perfection which it is impossible to circumscribe. If we have in any degree enabled the reader to realise this, our object will have been attained.

What we do claim is, that such riches of grace and truth as we have attempted to unfold, do indeed come from this mine; that we have legitimately extracted them from the narrative, not read them into it. Such manner of Man, we maintain, He must have been, who faced and conquered these Temptations: at the very least no less divine than this.

In conclusion, we will only point to the importance of the Temptation narrative as a link between the private and public life of Jesus. It furnishes us with the key to His subsequent career. In the light which it throws upon His inner life, the course which He adopted is revealed as a natural, and an entirely consistent one. Without that narrative, though we could still have discerned that He was shaping His life in harmony with certain fixed principles and convictions, we should be at a loss to understand how and when these became fixed and unalterable. We should not be able without it to see, through what inward experiences—experiences which confirm His humanity, at the same time that they demonstrate Him divine—the Carpenter of Nazareth passed, before He responded to the call of God;—by what travail and victory He consummated His thirty years of training, and proved Himself to be the strong Son of God, equal to the gigantic task of conquering evil, and of establishing the kingdom of heaven upon the earth.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE VISIT TO NAZARETH.

(Luke iv. 16-30, Matt. xiii. 54-58, Mark vi. 1-6.)

IN the Gospel according to Luke the interesting and graphic account of the visit of Jesus to Nazareth, and of the way in which He was received by His fellow-townsmen, follows almost immediately on the account of the Temptation. Readers of the Gospel are, in consequence, naturally led to suppose that it took place, at any rate, very soon after He commenced His public ministry.

This, however, is not the fact. For not only does the paragraph which Luke inserts between the account of this visit and the Temptation narrative imply the lapse of a considerable time,* but the remark which, in His speech in the Synagogue, Jesus supposes His fellow-townsmen to be making to Him: "Whatsoever we have heard done at Capernaum, do also here in thine own country," obliges us to conclude that He had, at least for some months, been occupied in teaching and healing, before He paid this visit to the place "where He had been brought up."

* Of course, it is not quite certain that the Evangelist in this paragraph is simply summarising the course of Jesus' life prior to this visit, though this is the natural interpretation to give to the passage.

The mention of Capernaum in particular, and the allusion to the mighty works He had done there, seem to point to this conclusion; for it is pretty certain that Jesus made that town His head-quarters during the early part of His public life; and from Mark ii. 1, we gather that He had a home there.* It is not quite certain whether the accounts given us in Matthew and Mark of a visit to Nazareth (Matt. xiii. 54-58; Mark vi. 1-6) refer to the same visit which Luke records; but if, as is most probable, they do, the fact that this visit was not paid till after the lapse of some months seems to be established.

It is important to bear this fact in mind in considering the narrative. In the light of it this graphic record is seen to be of surpassing interest.

For the Man whom we see here is not, as some have supposed, the young enthusiast fresh from His victories in the wilderness, hastening home to tell His fellow-townsmen of His call to the work of the Messiah; we do not see Him at a moment when a tide of the Spirit has uplifted Him to an unusual height of confidence and assurance, but rather as He habitually appeared when "He preached in their Synagogues, being glorified of all."

Many of the circumstances were, indeed, in this instance peculiar, and doubtless led Him to shape His conduct somewhat differently from the way in which He usually did. It is hardly possible, for instance, that in His preaching elsewhere He announced so boldly, as He did on this occasion, that the Messianic

* *Cf.* Rev. Ver. Mark ii. 1; margin.

prophecies were fulfilled in Himself. Elsewhere His audiences had been, for the most part, sympathetic, and He had not found it difficult to inspire them with that confidence which He demanded as a preliminary to the exercise of His miraculous gifts; here the people He addressed were critical and sceptical, and demanded an exhibition of His power as a proof of His claims. Elsewhere He addressed strangers; here He spoke to those who had known Him from childhood.

But these circumstances did not deter Him from following, at Nazareth, His usual custom of entering into the Synagogue on the Sabbath Day, and standing up to read. And though His address on this occasion can hardly be considered a typical one—the character of His preaching being suited to the peculiar circumstances—we are justified in inferring that it fairly represents His general style of preaching during this stage of His career.

And, indeed, the fact that the circumstances in this case were, to some extent, peculiar, gives us exceptionally good opportunities for forming an estimate of His Mind and Spirit.

We are able to see how He comported Himself—with what boldness, wisdom, firmness and self-control—in a most trying and difficult situation. This was, we have reason to believe, the first occasion since the commencement of His public ministry, on which His popularity received a decided check—the first on which He encountered opposition and unbelief—the first on which the shadow of the Cross fell definitely across His path. It was an occasion, therefore, which

put an unusual tax upon both His wisdom and His faith; one in which He must again have had to fight the devil—*i.e.*, on which He again encountered the temptation to make an illegitimate use of His power, and on which He was called, more decidedly than He had hitherto been, to carry out the resolutions He had arrived at in the wilderness.

At the same time we have presented to us, in this narrative, a very vivid picture of His ***habitual*** conduct and method of work: "He went, *as His custom was*, into the synagogue." Thus we are able to see here, perhaps more clearly than we can see in any other incident which is recorded of His early ministry (that is, up to the time when He ceased to be popular), what manner of Man He was.

For these reasons the narrative demands a close attention, and will well repay the student who is desirous of apprehending the Mind of Jesus.

We would remark before we go further, that the fact that He went to Nazareth at all, knowing (as He must have done) with what kind of reception He was likely to meet, furnishes us with no slight indication as to His Character.

He was evidently away from His head-quarters at the time, on a preaching tour in Galilee. Nazareth lay in His track. He might easily have avoided it, avoiding at the same time an unpleasant experience. But duty called Him to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom there, as elsewhere, and He would not shirk it. And so, "He came to Nazareth where He had been brought up, and He entered into the synagogue,

as His custom was, on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read."

Before we consider the narrative more in detail, we cannot refrain from saying one word concerning its merits as a piece of literature. It is one of the most charmingly simple and graphic narratives in the whole of the New Testament. The narrator must have been an eye-witness, and one who with loving watchfulness noted every action of his Master. "He stood up to read:" "He opened the roll and found the place where it was written, etc." "He closed the roll, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down:" "The eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on Him." With what admirable clearness the whole scene is brought before us! And how completely the writer effaces himself! He gives evidence that he was possessed by that perfect devotion to his subject which is indispensable to the best work. He wrote, not to glorify himself, but his Lord. He "lost his life," and verily thereby he has saved it, for he lives now in his work, and will for ever live.

And now let us follow the narrative, and see what we can learn from it concerning the Man who is its central figure.

It was a Sabbath day, and in the quiet village of Nazareth the people, as usual, assembled in the synagogue to engage in public worship.

But there was unusual excitement among them on that Sabbath. For it was known that the son of Joseph the carpenter had come to visit His old home; it was certain that He would be in the synagogue that day, and it was probable that He would address them.

He had been away for some months; and, during His absence, astonishing news concerning Him had been conveyed to His native place. It was well known by report that He had come forward as a Teacher; that He had also wrought wonderful miracles; that everywhere people were talking about Him, and were marvelling at His words and works.

This was very astonishing to the Nazarenes. He had lived with them for thirty years; they had associated with Him familiarly; and they had never discovered that He differed in a marked degree from themselves—never discovered that He had the making of a prophet in Him. They were inclined to be very sceptical on that point. Surely if He did possess such wonderful power—if He had the gifts which fitted Him for the work He had undertaken, they would have discovered it long ago! But they very much doubted if He had. They were inclined to think Him a presumptuous young upstart. The reports of His miracles, they were inclined to think, were, in all probability, greatly exaggerated. They were determined not to believe Him capable of doing anything so wonderful, until He had given them some signal proof of His power. Had they not reason to be sceptical? Were not His mother and His brethren living quietly among them? Why should He suddenly step out of the sphere in which He had so long moved with them, and take to the rôle of teacher and miracle worker?

But while they were thus sceptical, there was, at the same time an undercurrent of conviction that the reports concerning Him were true. And they were

very angry with Him in consequence; and it was their anger, as much as anything, which led them to refuse to believe on Him. They were angry (as we gather from His speech) because He had selected Capernaum as the place in which to do His mighty works, instead of Nazareth; and because, when He did come amongst them, He refused to do for their gratification similar deeds of power to those which He had done there. This they regarded as a great slight. And in their anger they determined to construe His unwillingness as inability. He ought, they considered, to have bestowed on them, first of all, the benefits which, as the Messiah, He could confer—if indeed He were the Messiah; but this they determined not to believe, on account of the neglect with which He had treated them.

This was the state of mind in which the majority of His fellow-townsmen went to the synagogue on that Sabbath morning. They, perhaps, half expected (Jesus seems to indicate as much in His speech) to see Him do some mighty work—to give them a "sign" in justification of His conduct and claims. At the same time they were very much inclined to doubt whether He could thus justify Himself. For the rest, they evidently felt that they had a right to demand some proof of this kind; they assumed that they had a perfect right, and were fully competent, to sit in judgment on Him; they never dreamt that He would have the presumption to judge them!

Jesus, as they expected, came to the synagogue, and, probably by pre-arrangement with the authorities, stood up to read. "And there was delivered unto

Him the roll of the prophet Isaiah." This most likely was the roll which contained the ordinary lesson for the day; but, though it is possible that, by a striking coincidence, the passage He read formed part of that lesson, it is more probable, and the language of Luke seems to imply, that He departed from the ordinary routine, and selected a passage which suited His purpose. "He opened the roll, and found the place where it was written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because (or wherefore) He anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.' And He closed the roll, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down,"—indicating by so doing that He was about to speak.

For a few moments there was a deathlike silence in the place, for His choice of that remarkable prophecy in Isaiah, the tone of His voice, and the look in His face as He read it, had riveted their attention, and had made them feel that He was about to say something of importance; so they waited expectant for Him to begin.

Let us pause for a moment before we consider what He said, to admire the calm deliberation which attended Jesus' actions on this occasion—the quiet strength of character of which He gave evidence; and the boldness with which, without hesitation and without parade, He undertook the difficult duty of the hour.

He was in the presence of those who had known

Him from childhood—critical friends and sceptical acquaintances; yet people to whom His heart went out with a great yearning. There was hardly a face in the synagogue that morning which was not familiar to Him; there was hardly a man or woman, boy or girl, with whom He had not had some intercourse; His mother, and brothers, and sisters were there; there must have been many more whom He knew intimately; doubtless there were not a few whom He loved.

It is difficult for a man in these circumstances to be perfectly composed; thrice difficult when he knows that what he has to say will be very unpalatable to his audience, and will probably arouse their anger and resentment.

But He was as calm as He could possibly have been if there had been nothing extraordinary in the circumstances—as calm and deliberate in His movements as He was afterwards in situations of equal, and even of greater difficulty—when, for instance, He stilled the storm; and when He stood in the presence of Pilate. He quietly unrolls the parchment till He finds the passage He wants; He quietly hands it back to the attendant when He has read it; He quietly takes His seat in the preacher's chair, while "the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on Him."

And how appropriate was the passage He chose! What a perfectly fitting introduction to the message He was about to deliver; indeed, that *was* the message, though the character of His audience compelled Him to enlarge on it. He selects from the pages of the Scriptures the one passage which most

clearly proclaims the truth about Himself—the strange, amazing truth, about which His audience is so dubious. He will hide nothing: He will extenuate nothing: He calmly, boldly proclaims to His sceptical hearers the simple truth.

Can we imagine a course of conduct more firm and dignified, more wise and truthful, than that which Jesus adopted on this occasion? Was it not the exactly right and fitting course for the Son in Whom the Father was well pleased, to take?

And He began to say unto them—sitting there quietly, and in the gaze of His expectant and already half-hostile audience, "To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears."

What He said in this first part of His speech, the Evangelist does not record; he simply summarises it in these words. It is only when he comes to that part of Jesus' discourse which roused the fury of His hearers, that he gives the actual words; and probably even here he does not record the whole of what He said.

We cannot but regret that he did not give us the discourse in full. We should have liked one complete sample of Jesus' preaching in the synagogues—should have liked to know what these "words of grace" were, which caused even His sceptical, unsympathetic townsfolk to "bear Him witness and wonder."

We must be thankful, however, that we are told so much. We are told what was the drift of it, and can infer a good deal concerning both its form and substance, from what is recorded of the latter part of the speech:—how rich, for instance, it must have

been in quotations from the Scriptures, and in lucid explanations of the ancient prophecies.

"To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears," that was the burden of it. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon *me;* he hath anointed *me* to preach good tidings to the poor; He hath sent *me* to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." As He expounded this to them, and unfolded its inner meaning—told them what the good tidings were, what was the bondage from which He could release them, what the vision He could bring to their blind eyes, what the liberty with which He could make them free, what the privileges of the year of Jubilee that had come,—as He told them all this, with a light in His eyes they had never seen before, and a ring of solemn earnestness in His familiar voice, no wonder they marvelled, and said, "Is not this Joseph's son?"

But ere long their astonishment was turned to anger; for He proceeded to tell them many unpalatable truths.

"You do not believe in me, and you are offended at me. You want me to do here, what you have heard that I have been doing at Capernaum; to establish these claims of mine by giving some signal proof of my power. You say, 'If he wanted to come forward as a prophet, why didn't he begin here? why should he go away to Capernaum to do all his mighty works there?' Verily I say unto you, no prophet is acceptable in his own country." And then He proceeded to justify His actions by citing two instances from the

history of the nation, in which prophets had set Him an example in this respect—had taken up their abode among, and had used their powers to aid, strangers and aliens, while passing by many nearer home, who equally needed, and who apparently had a far better claim on their presence and help. "It was to a widow of Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, that Elijah was sent, not to any of the many widows of Israel. It was Naaman the Syrian who was cleansed of his leprosy by Elisha, not any of the lepers of his own land."

But this plain speaking was more than His audience could put up with. "They were all filled with wrath in the synagogue as they heard these things." What! did this young carpenter come posing to them as a prophet and miracle-worker—as the very Messiah, forsooth,—and then actually dare to tell them that they, who certainly were as good as He, and who surely, on the grounds of long acquaintance, if on no other, had the first claim on His attention, and the best rights to the benefits He had to bestow, if He were indeed the Messiah—did He dare to tell them they were neither capable of pronouncing judgment on His claims nor worthy to receive His ministrations! It was intolerable! And, moved by a common impulse, they rose up, and hustled Him out of the synagogue and the town, and began to lead Him to the height which overlooked it, that they might throw him down headlong. But, ere they reached it, their anger began to cool, and His calm dignity began to impress them. Numbers of them, doubtless, dropped away, not wishing to take any active part in the deed of violence; the remainder began to hesitate, and finally allowed Him

to pass through their midst uninjured, and to go His way.

Such is the account of the first, and possibly—though this is not quite certain—the only visit which Jesus paid to His native town after He had begun His public ministry; this is how He was received; and this is how He bore Himself, in circumstances so difficult, and among people so blind, faithless, and perverse.

We have already touched upon the chief features of His conduct and Character which the narrative affords us an opportunity for noting:—features which we have every reason to suppose were habitual, though the peculiar circumstances throw them into stronger relief in this instance.

In going to the synagogue, in standing up to read, and in afterwards addressing the congregation, we know He only acted in accordance with His usual custom. And we can be certain that at all the other cities and villages where He "preached in their synagogues," He showed the same calm strength, the same wisdom, the same boldness, the same transparent truthfulness, the same loyalty to the highest duty, the same devotion to His Father's business, as He did on this occasion. We may be sure also that His preaching elsewhere was characterised by the same wealth of Scripture quotation and illustration, and the same insight into its spirit; and we may legitimately infer that in taking up one of the ancient prophecies, and unfolding its inner meaning, and showing how it was about to be fulfilled in the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven by Himself, He was doing no

more than following His ordinary methods of exposition.

But above and beyond these features of His conduct and methods, which we feel justified in believing that He habitually exhibited, the peculiar circumstances connected with this visit to Nazareth made extraordinary demands upon Him,—put His Character and His powers to a severer test than usual,—perhaps to a severer test than they had undergone since His temptations in the wilderness. It is necessary to take this into account in forming a true estimate of the Man, as He stands revealed by this incident.

There are two circumstances connected with this visit to Nazareth—in addition to the fact that the people were critical and hostile—which are peculiar to it:—two circumstances which made that day one of peculiar trial and difficulty for Him. To cope with these successfully required the exercise of the highest moral and spiritual power. They put His divine Sonship to the severest proof; in the light of them the wisdom, firmness, and self-control which He displayed are revealed as doubly divine.

These are: the fact that the Nazarenes made the demand of Him, "whatsoever we have heard done at Capernaum, do also here in thine own country"; and the fact that they rejected, and attempted to murder Him. These, therefore, require to be considered a little more in detail.

The Nazarenes, we have seen, were both angry and sceptical, their scepticism being to a considerable extent (though not entirely) the outcome of their

anger. They were angry because Jesus refused to do among them the mighty works He had done at Capernaum, and this led them to harden their hearts in unbelief.

We must suppose that during the time He had been with them previous to this Sabbath*, Jesus had led them to see that they were not to expect Him to give any such exhibition of His power as He had given elsewhere. Matthew and Mark give us the reason; they were sceptical to begin with, and Jesus, having strictly resolved that He would not make use of His power simply to astonish and overawe—that He would not gratify the popular craving for a "sign"—could not, because He would not, do many mighty works there (nothing beyond laying His hands on a few sick folk, Mark vi. 6) "because of their unbelief," *i.e.*, because the conditions were not present under which alone He had determined to exercise His power.

This refusal of His angered them, and at the same time confirmed them in their scepticism.

Still the narrative in Luke seems to indicate that they after all half expected that He would work a "sign" among them. We infer from it that they came to the synagogue that morning so eagerly to hear Him, because they anticipated that He would declare Himself—in the only way in which their dull minds and gross imaginations could conceive of Him doing it—by performing some marvellous work of wonder.

*Cf. Mark vi. 2. "When the Sabbath was come," which indicates that He had been among them for some days previously.

Now, bearing in mind that this was the attitude and expectation of His audience—an expectation which indeed they had had during the previous week, but which was concentrated on this occasion—we can realise what a test this Sabbath's experience was to Jesus—what a temptation He had to fight—what strength of will and self-control He had to exert.

Why should He not gratify His countrymen's craving for a sign? Why should He not give them the proof they demanded that He was the Messiah? He might thereby turn their hostility into friendship—their incredulity into enthusiastic devotion—and afterwards succeed in disabusing their minds of the low, material conceptions which filled them with regard to the Messiah and His work, and bring them to the knowledge of the truth; would not this be better than leaving them in darkness and unbelief? We cannot say for certain that such suggestions as these came to Him, but we think it probable, for we can confidently assert that they were such as would naturally present themselves to one in His position, and was He not "in all points tempted like as we are"?

That He never for a moment entertained them—that, so far as we can gather from His conduct, they were, if they came at all, instantaneously dismissed, is certain. And in either case—whether His mind was so pure and holy—whether His victory in the wilderness had been so complete—that such thoughts never came to Him; or whether they came and were dismissed, His conduct and Character bear the stamp of an excellence—a perfection,—which is wholly divine. Not only would He work no miracle to justify

Himself; He would adopt no means other than purely spiritual ones to draw men to Himself. He resolutely refused to win the approval of His fellow-countrymen, by proving to them that He was a wonder-worker. He would aim at nothing less than the winning of their loyalty and affection by the manifestation of grace and truth; and as He could not succeed, He "marvelled at their unbelief," and "went His way." Thus we see how severely tested on this occasion were both the resolve He made in the wilderness concerning the use to which He would put His miraculous power; and His resolve to win men by love, not by force or fear. We find Him, with a firmness and calmness so perfect, so natural, as to be apparently without effort, victoriously meeting the tests to which life's experience subjected His great resolutions; we find Him proving Himself to be the Son of God, by manifesting, in these difficult circumstances, a godlike strength, and wisdom, and purity, and grace.

The second circumstance peculiar to this occasion was the wrath which He encountered—wrath so blind and reckless that it led His countrymen not only to cast Him out of the synagogue, but to seek to kill Him. This was the first occasion, apparently, on which Jesus encountered opposition. Previously He had "preached in their synagogues, being glorified of all." But now, for the first time, the shadow of death fell across His path. He received a clear warning that His popularity could not last,—that His nation would not accept Him as the Messiah, but would, if He persisted in the plan He had adopted,—if He refused to conform to their ideas of Messiahship,—if

He continued to "bear witness of the truth," regardless of the prejudices and prepossessions of His hearers—angrily reject Him, and compass His death.

It is not likely, indeed, that the reception which His countrymen accorded Him could have taken Him by surprise; nor that the warning with which it furnished Him could have been unanticipated. He must have anticipated before He went to the synagogue that morning, the effect His words would produce; and He must have foreseen, before He commenced His public ministry, the Cross at its close. But it is one thing, with most men, to foresee and resolve; it is quite another thing to be firm and unflinching, in circumstances which confirm the foresight, and test the resolve. Many a man has made noble resolves, clearly foreseeing the consequences which would ensue, but has failed to keep true to them when the hour of trial has come. Many a Peter has denied his Lord in the judgment hall, who has previously declared, "Though I should die with thee yet will I not deny thee."

Not so Jesus. On this first occasion on which His resolves were severely tested, and on all subsequent occasions, even to that last one when they were tested to the utmost, He showed not the least sign of wavering; He exhibited an immovable firmness, an unruffled calm. Duty called Him to speak to His angry and unbelieving fellow-townsmen plain words of warning and reproof; and He spoke them as boldly, as calmly, as if He were addressing an audience of enthusiastic admirers. As they led Him to the brow of the hill to consummate their rage in murder, He was

still so calm, so dignified, that at length they were overawed, and allowed Him to pass through their midst uninjured. Calmly He left them, and went His way; but not to brood in moody solitude over the great rebuff He had experienced; not to reconsider His plans; not to mourn over His approaching doom. No! He left them and went His way, to calmly continue elsewhere the great work He had undertaken,—to prosecute it unflinchingly, though ere long, all Galilee turned against Him, like Nazareth, and all Judaea like Galilee; till the whole nation took up the cry, "Crucify Him, crucify Him"; till the fate which this Sabbath day's proceedings foreshadowed, in grim reality overtook Him, and still calm, and unmoved by doubt or fear, though despised and rejected of men, He was led out of Jerusalem to die.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE GALILEAN CRISIS.

(John vi., Matt. xiv., Mark vi. 14-56, Luke ix. 7-17.)

THE sixth chapter of the Gospel according to John contains a record of what has been aptly called "the Galilean Crisis."

The events which immediately preceded, and which led up to this crisis:—the retirement of Jesus with his disciples to the north-eastern corner of the Lake of Galilee, the following of Him by the multitudes, and the miracle of the feeding of them—are related by all the Synoptists, as well as in the Fourth Gospel. Matthew and Mark record also the events of the succeeding night—the retirement of Jesus to a mountain to pray, after having first sent His disciples away by boat, and then dismissed the multitude; and His walking on the sea. Matthew further records the incident of Peter's attempt to imitate his master.

The actual crisis itself, however, which occurred at Capernaum on the following day, is only recorded in the Fourth Gospel. The Synoptists give us no hint of it. If we had their accounts alone, we should gather that Jesus, on His return "to Gennesaret," resumed the methods of work which He had previously practised, amid unabated popularity. (Matt. xiv. 34-36. Mark

vi. 53-56). It is only from what is recorded in the subsequent chapters—the opposition of the Pharisees and Scribes from Jerusalem; His retirement to the borders of Tyre, and His attempt to make His disciples realize the fate which awaited Him—that we can infer from them (and that by no means with certainty), that about this time anything of the nature of a crisis occurred—a revulsion of popular feeling with regard to Him, which made it impossible for Him any longer to pursue the course He had previously adopted, for the accomplishment of the work His Father had given Him to do.

There is no reason, however, for doubting the substantial accuracy of the account of the actual crisis which the Fourth Gospel gives us.

We say "the substantial accuracy," because there is considerable reason for doubting whether the account of the controversy with "the Jews," which actually caused the crisis, is *in form* correct.

Some of the best commentators acknowledge that the controversy as it is recorded in John vi. 25-58, was not a continuous one—that there were two, if not three, breaks in it,* and if this was so, we cannot have here more than an abstract of what actually occurred, thrown into dramatic form by the narrator. It is very doubtful, indeed, how far we can insist on any of the language used in this controversy as being the "ipsissima verba" of Jesus. The teaching of Jesus

* Cf. Edersheim, "Life and Times of Jesus," II, 29, 31, 32. Westcott on John vi. 37 and 41. We have discussed fully the problem of the fourth Gospel in the chapter on "The Spiritual Consciousness of Jesus."

as we have it in the Fourth Gospel has, as the critics have long recognised, "passed through the mould of a remarkable mind,"* and when we compare it with the teaching recorded by the Synoptists, there remains little doubt that, in passing through that mould, both the language and the ideas of Jesus have undergone important modification.

It is not necessary, however, for us to enter here on a discussion of the question: how far the writer of the Fourth Gospel is a correct reporter of Jesus' sayings. The subject is an interesting one, but it is beyond the scope of our present purpose.

Our aim now is to discover what manner of man the Man called Jesus was, by examining how He comported Himself in this crisis of His career. In order to do this, we need not assume more than that the crisis actually occurred in some such manner as the Evangelist records, *i.e.*, that Jesus, at this point in His public ministry, by plain speaking concerning Himself and His mission, effectually dispelled the hopes and anticipations which He had aroused in the minds of the multitude, and, by so doing, also effectually quenched popular enthusiasm; from that moment entering on the narrow path which led straight to the Cross.

We will only remark further by way of preface, that though the Synoptists give us no account of this crisis, and we could not certainly gather from them that anything of the sort occurred in the life of our

* Cf. Gore's Essay on Inspiration in "Lux Mundi." M. Arnold, "God and the Bible," "The Fourth Gospel."

Lord, yet in the light of the record of it given in the Fourth Gospel, much in them becomes plain.

Unchronological as their accounts are, we can plainly gather from them not only that a time came when Jesus ceased to "preach in the synagogues, being glorified of all," but when Capernaum ceased to be His home, and His career as a popular teacher and healer ended. (Cf. Matt. xi., 23.) It is evident also that it was not until His disciples had been for some time associated with Him, that He began to throw out hints to them concerning His death. This, of course, may have been because He did not consider them previously sufficiently enlightened, and sufficiently attached to Him to be able to bear to hear the truth; but it seems likely that it was also, and quite as much, because He Himself did not for some time clearly recognise that that must be the inevitable end. At any rate, amid the first blaze of popularity, thoughts of that end, if they came to Him, must have come only at intervals. It could only have been after His popularity had waned—it could only have been after some such crisis as is recorded in the Fourth Gospel—that the frequent and serious contemplation of it must have been forced upon Him.

And, let us add, on other grounds, it is more than probable—it is, indeed, practically certain—that a crisis of this sort occurred in the public ministry of Jesus. We could unhesitatingly make that assertion, even though none of the Evangelists had left us any account of it. The account in the Fourth Gospel harmonises perfectly with the Character of the Jesus of the Synoptists; it harmonises also with

universal experience. Jesus could not have continued to be the popular teacher and healer. No man of unworldly character and lofty spiritual aims—no great religious reformer—no man of inflexible fidelity to truth, can continue long to be the idol of the populace. It was natural that at first, when He went about sowing the seed of the Kingdom—preaching in the synagogues, or wherever men congregated, and healing the sick—He should be "glorified of all." But it was quite as natural that a time should come when He could no longer continue in such a course, without being unfaithful to the great purpose which He had set Himself to accomplish. It was natural and inevitable that a time should arrive, when He had to make choice between accommodating His preaching and life to the prejudices, and preconceptions, and anticipations of the people, or alienating them by stern refusal to thus accommodate Himself to them, and by a plain setting forth of the real aim and object of His mission. Moreover, a time was bound to come when such genuine fruit as His sowing had resulted in was ripe for gathering; when all the good that could be accomplished by following the method which He adopted when He commenced His public ministry had been accomplished, and only harm could result from pursuing it further; when it became absolutely necessary for Him to sift His followers, and to discern who were His disciples indeed, by such a declaration of His purposes as should render it impossible for any to continue with Him, except such as were genuinely attached to Him, and had

desires, not only for "the meat which perisheth," but also for that which "abideth unto eternal life."

It becomes abundantly evident, when we supplement the account of the occurrences which led up to the crisis, given us in the Fourth Gospel, by those furnished us by the Synoptists, that such a time arrived in the history of Jesus—apparently towards the middle of His public career. A combination of circumstances rendered it at length imperative that He should damp the popular enthusiasm, and devote Himself henceforth, principally at any rate, to the training of the faithful few.

We will briefly consider what these circumstances were, before we proceed to study the Character of the Man, as it stands revealed to us by His conduct amid them, and in the crisis which followed.

The Fourth Gospel does not assign any reason for the withdrawal of Jesus from Capernaum to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. (John vi. 1.) We gather from the Synoptists, however, that there was a two-fold reason for this withdrawal. Mark distinctly tells us that the primary reason was the need which the disciples had of rest, after their return from their missionary tour. (Mark vi. 31.) But Matthew and Luke inform us that there was another reason also. Herod got to hear of all that Jesus was doing, and "was much perplexed." Matthew reports that Herod himself believed that it was John, whom he had beheaded, risen from the dead, and is corroborated by Mark. Luke, however, informs us that this was only one of the reports current concerning Jesus—a report which Herod himself did not credit. "John I be-

headed," Luke reports Herod to have said, "but who is this about whom I hear such things?" Luke's account is doubtless the more correct one. Herod was not the man to believe in resurrections. John, he felt convinced, was dead and done with, he would not be troubled by John any more. But here, according to report, was some one making even a greater stir than John. Herod's curiosity was excited, and perhaps he was not altogether free from alarm. John had created commotion enough; might not this new prophet prove more troublesome and dangerous than he? He must satisfy himself on the point. And so, Luke significantly tells us (Luke ix. 9), "He sought to see him."

Jesus had no desire to get into Herod's clutches, and to share John's fate. Later on in His career, when He foresaw that His death was inevitable, and that it was necessary His mission should have such a consummation, He did not hesitate to defy Herod, and to go on His way, unmoved by reports that he was seeking to kill him. (Luke xii. 3-34.)

But the time for that had not yet come. And so, as Matthew distinctly tells us, when Jesus got to know that Herod had heard about Him, and was speculating concerning Him, He deemed it prudent to withdraw for a while from public notice. With this object in view He accordingly "withdrew from thence," *i.e.*, from Capernaum—which up to that time He had made His headquarters, and where in all probability He had a settled residence—"to a desert place apart." (Matt. xiv. 13.)

We need hardly remark that there is no incompatibility between the reason assigned by Matthew for

the withdrawal, and that assigned by Mark. Both reasons may well, and almost equally, have influenced Jesus in the course which He adopted. Mark, indeed, like Matthew, gives the account of the death of John, prefacing it also by the statement that Herod had got to hear of it, and to speculate about Jesus; though he does not, like Matthew, distinctly connect this with the fact of the withdrawal. Luke, it is to be noted, though he records both the fact that Herod sought to see Jesus, and the fact of the return of the Apostles, in close connection with the withdrawal, does not distinctly assign either as the reason for it.

After comparing and combining the different narratives it seems quite safe to assert that Jesus, at this stage of His career, desired to withdraw awhile from public notice; partly in order to rest the disciples after their missionary labours, partly in order to avoid Herod. Doubtless also He desired an opportunity for instructing His disciples more fully in the great truths concerning the Kingdom of God. Such an opportunity He could not possibly find when "there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat." (Matt. vi. 31.) He may have hoped also that, after His departure, popular enthusiasm—which He must have seen was rising to a dangerous height—would gradually subside, and with it Herod's desire to see Him.

A yet further reason has been assigned by some, based on the fact, recorded in the Fourth Gospel, that "the passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand." For Jesus to have gone up to Jerusalem to this pass-

over would have been to court the fate of John. It was natural, however, that He should wish to spend the passover season in quiet rest; and moreover, at no period could He better pause in His labours than at a time when such large numbers of His countrymen would be away from their homes on the annual visit to Jerusalem.

What course Jesus would have pursued if He had been permitted undisturbed to carry out His design of going into temporary retirement, and how long He would have continued in that retirement —whether He would have taken up again the work in which He had previously been engaged, or whether He would quietly have dropped the *rôle* of popular preacher and healer, and have devoted Himself henceforth—as He was compelled to do after the crisis had occurred—principally to the work of training the twelve:—about these questions it is futile to speculate. For, as we know, circumstances did not permit Him to carry out His plan. He could not shake Himself free of the multitudes. When they saw Him take ship with His disciples, and sail away towards Bethsaida, they immediately started in pursuit of Him—going by land round the head of the lake—and, Mark informs us, "outwent them," so that on approaching the land Jesus found, instead of solitude, a great crowd awaiting Him.

He might have sailed away again without landing; but when "He came forth" (from the little cabin, in all probability, in which He had been taking a much-needed rest), and saw the multitude, "He had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having

a shepherd," (Mark vi. 34), and resumed once more the duties of teacher and healer. Then followed the miracle of the feeding of them; and this created such enthusiasm that, the Fourth Gospel informs us, the people determined forcibly to make Him king.

This fact, which the other Gospels do not record, is, to our mind, the most important one of the whole series of events which led up to the crisis. In the light of it, the events which followed—the hasty sending away of the disciples (for which Matthew and Mark, who both record it, furnish us with no reasons), the retirement of Jesus to the Mountain, the return to Capernaum, and the plain speaking in which He indulged after his return—are perfectly intelligible. Such an ebullition of popular feeling was what Jesus must have long feared, and just what He was most anxious to avoid. Its occurrence at this particular time, when He not only desired rest, but when it was most necessary to avoid the notice of Herod, was, as we should say, "most unfortunate." It required to be met by prompt and decisive action, for it threatened the utter ruin of all His hopes and plans for the establishment of a Kingdom of God in the world. He must stop at once and for ever all attempts at king-making. That He recognised clearly. He saw that He had reached the turning point of His career. He was convinced, from that moment, that He could no longer with either safety or profit continue in the course which He had hitherto pursued. If the great majority of those to whom He had so often spoken concerning the Kingdom of God, had failed to attain to any higher concep-

tion of it than *that*, it was high time for Him to ascertain if there were any by whom His teaching had really begun to be apprehended, and to devote Himself to the feeding of them with the spiritual food which He had to impart. To continue teaching and ministering to the multitude, who sought Him only for the sake of material benefits, and, after all His unfolding of the nature of the Kingdom He came to establish, wished to make Him leader of the revolt, was to cast pearls before swine. He must, at the risk—or rather with the certainty—of alienating the sympathies of the great majority of His followers, so plainly declare what was the great purpose which He was striving to accomplish, that the selfish and worldly-minded should no longer have any excuse for following Him. He must enter the lonely valley of the shadow of death.

It was to these conclusions that Jesus came, if not immediately on perceiving that the multitude was about to take Him by force to make Him king, yet certainly by the following day. Meantime He proceeded at once to take such steps as the situation demanded.

He first of all hastily sent away His disciples. In all probability they sympathised to a very great extent with the desire of the multitude, and it was necessary to get them out of the way. Besides He wanted to be alone, to meditate and pray.

He then proceeded to dismiss the multitude. In the previous chapter we have seen how He overawed, and passed unharmed through the midst of an excited and angry throng, and we can easily understand that

He found no great difficulty, on the present occasion, in controlling the enthusiasm which He had roused, and in persuading at least the majority of the people to quietly disperse.

He plainly saw, however, that it was necessary to do much more besides temporarily damping the ardour of the multitude. He must adopt such measures as should effectually prevent it from rising again to such a dangerous height.

Whether, however, when He sent the disciples away, He had already decided to take the course which He afterwards adopted, at Capernaum, we have no means of deciding. It seems most reasonable to suppose that He had not. Circumstances which He could not have foreseen determined the form in which the crisis was precipitated. It was the exigence of the moment which led Him to despatch His disciples. It was their toil-worn and perilous condition on the storm-tossed waves which led Him to join them, "about the fourth watch of the night." It was the fact that many among the multitude would not take His dismissal of them as final, but lingered till the following morning at "the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks," and then, when they could not find Him there, returned to Capernaum in search of Him:—it was this chain of unforeseen events which led Him, on encountering them there, to enter into the controversy which produced the crisis.

Meantime what He most urgently needed was time for quiet meditation and prayer. He needed to reflect on the events of the afternoon, in order to realise their significance, and to determine their full bearing on

His work and mission. He needed renewal of spiritual strength, to enable Him to steadfastly face the changing circumstances of His career; He needed, we will not say to review and reconsider, but to fortify Himself anew in those mighty resolutions which He had formed at the commencement of His public life—from which now, if at any stage of His career, He must have been tempted to swerve; He needed that comfort and consolation amid the disappointment and failure of the hour—and the fact that the multitude wished to make Him king was proof enough that He had failed—which He could only gain by communion with His Father.

And so, "after He had sent the multitude away, He went up into the mountain apart to pray." (Matt. xiv. 23.)

It was, as we have remarked, the exigence of the moment which led Jesus to send His disciples away. Apparently He told them not to wait for Him, but to return to Capernaum. It is not probable that, at the time when He gave them this direction, He had considered the question, how He should rejoin them; nor yet whether He should pursue the intention which He had in view when He so recently left that place—the intention of obtaining rest. The business of the hour was too urgent, and the development of events too uncertain, to permit Him to make any plans of that sort. And, after He had retired to the mountain to pray, He was, for some hours, too much occupied with higher matters, and more difficult questions, to think of the immediate future. A circumstance, evidently unforeseen, determined the course which He

adopted. Happening, in the dim dawn, to cast a glance over the lake, He caught sight of the boat in which His disciples were, in a position of difficulty, if not of danger.

One of those sudden storms which sweep down so suddenly upon the Sea of Galilee, had met them in their progress. After hours of rowing in the face of it, they had not made much more than half the distance to the other side, and were by this time exhausted with toil. Jesus apprehended the situation at a glance, and immediately recognising and responding to the duty which lay nearest to Him, "cometh unto them walking on the sea."

Appearing in such an unexpected manner, He was not at first recognised by His disciples. On catching sight of Him they were terrified, saying, "It is an apparition;" but coming within hail, He reassured them, and—after Peter's characteristic attempt to join Him in the water, recorded by Matthew,—"went up unto them into the boat."

Matthew and Mark record the fact that at the same time "the wind ceased," and the Fourth Gospel says, "straightway the boat was at the land whither they were going." Whether these circumstances were miraculous or not, it does not concern us now to inquire. The fact to be noted is that within twenty-four hours of the time when Jesus had started from Capernaum, with the intention of avoiding publicity and gaining rest, He was back there again, with His plans upset, and with the whole aspect of His mission changed:—with the stern duty before Him of shattering His popularity, and of realising henceforth that

conception of God's servant which the prophet depicted when he wrote, "He was despised and rejected of men."

The opportunity for accomplishing the task the necessity of which had been demonstrated by the previous day's experience, was not long in presenting itself.

Though He had, on the previous evening, succeeded in curbing the enthusiasm of the multitude, and in avoiding their ill-advised attempt to proclaim Him king, that enthusiasm still remained a potent force, and rendered the attempt liable to repetition.

Some portion of the people, probably the more ardent, after the retirement of Jesus to the mountain, lingered in the neighbourhood throughout the night, expecting that He would rejoin them on the following morning; but as He did not appear, they hailed some boats which had been driven to that unfrequented place by the storm, and returned in them to Capernaum, "seeking Jesus."

They appear to have had no difficulty in finding Him. He does not seem to have made any attempt to escape notice. Probably He expected their return, and had fully decided on the course He would adopt when He encountered them again. On hearing of His whereabouts they hastened into His presence, inquiring with gaping astonishment, "Rabbi, when camest thou hither?"

Jesus at once seized the opportunity afforded by this question to precipitate the crisis. He administered to them, first of all, a stern reproof for seeking Him from selfish and ignoble motives, and not

because they were animated by any desire to be spiritually enlightened and fed. And then He proceeded to explain to them what the real object of His mission was—to feed, not their bodies, but their souls; not to minister to, or to gratify, carnal or worldly desires, but spiritual ones; not to help them to live the life of relations with the things which are seen, but to teach them to live the eternal life, by teaching them to know and to do the will of His Father—God.

This, to them, strange and disappointing announcement, led apparently to a prolonged discussion and controversy, the details of which, as regards time and place, the Fourth Gospel does not record, beyond stating the fact that part of it was carried on in a synagogue. Nor can we, as we have already pointed out, accept the report of the controversy itself without reservation. We cannot regard it as anything more than an abstract of what took place, thrown into dramatic form by the writer of the Fourth Gospel.

How far the words put into our Lord's mouth by the Evangelist, and the metaphors employed, *i.e.*, the eating of heavenly bread, and the eating and drinking of the flesh and blood of the Son of Man—were those actually used by Him, it is impossible to say.

But from the account given, the general drift of the discussion is easily discerned, and we need not hesitate to accept it as—in substance, though not in form—a truthful record of what actually occurred. Jesus set Himself to convince His hearers that He had no sympathy whatever with the narrow hopes and low desires which the majority of them alone cherished;—that His aim and mission differed radically from their

conceptions concerning it, and their wishes with regard to it. He made it plain to all the selfish and worldly-minded among them, that He had no material benefits to bestow upon those who attached themselves to Him. At the same time, for the benefit of those who had not been following Him solely from selfish motives, He unfolded—probably more fully than He had ever done in public before—the real aim and object of His mission; insisting most strongly on the fact that God had appointed Him to the work which He had undertaken, and confidently claiming to be able to completely satisfy the spiritual needs of those who would attach themselves to Him.

The results of this controversy were just what Jesus had anticipated, and indeed desired. "Many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him."

The death blow had been given to His popularity; and though, during His last journey to Jerusalem, it seems to have revived to some extent, it never henceforth could be said of Him that He was "glorified of all."

The twelve, however, or, to speak more accurately, eleven of them, remained faithful to Him; and, from that day forward, shunning as much as possible public notice, He occupied Himself chiefly in instructing them in the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, and in training them for their destined work.

Such then, as we interpret it, was the important crisis in the public ministry of Jesus, of which the author of the Fourth Gospel has left us a record. It is possible that some readers may not be able to see eye to eye with us in the view we have taken of it.

This is inevitable, seeing that the narrative of the crisis is to be found only in that Gospel, the authorship and reliability of which are still, and are likely long to remain, the subjects of animated controversy.

But, unless the Fourth Gospel be regarded as altogether unreliable, we can hardly hesitate to accept, as substantially true, its record of what occurred on this occasion. And we have no reason for doubting the plain intimation which it gives us that the crisis was brought about by deliberate action on the part of Jesus. *It was not in spite of, but in consequence of what He did, and said, that His popularity was destroyed.* Had He wished to remain popular, He might easily have done so. He need not have returned to Capernaum at all; nor need He, when there, have indulged in the plain speaking which so offended and disappointed His hearers. That He acted deliberately, in response to the clear call of duty, and that He did so calmly and unhesitatingly, not shrinking from, though He clearly foresaw, the consequences and outcome of the course He determined to adopt; this, we think, is clearly implied in, if not demonstrated by, the narrative.

And if this view of the matter be the correct one, what an insight is given us here into the Mind and Spirit of the Divine Man whose Character we are endeavouring to unfold. Could any conduct be wiser, bolder, nobler, more courageous, more self-sacrificing, more sublime in its unswerving loyalty to God and truth, than this which Jesus displayed in this difficult and dangerous crisis of His life?

Our previous study of His Character would un-

doubtedly lead us to anticipate that He would act wisely, promptly, and unselfishly in such a crisis; but the reality in this case, as in all cases in which we are brought face to face with the living Man, far surpasses all expectation. We are not altogether surprised to find that He who put aside the temptation to found an earthly kingdom, should have sternly repressed the ebullition of popular enthusiasm which burst forth on this occasion; but if we had not had it on record, should we have dared to anticipate that He would not only clearly and instantly see the warning conveyed by that event—clearly and instantly see that He had reached a point in His career at which it was necessary for Him either to destroy His popularity, or to be unfaithful to the great purpose to which He had consecrated His life—but that, on seeing this, He would at once, resolutely, and without hesitation, strike such a blow at His popularity as to shatter the allegiance of the great majority of His followers, and make it doubtful whether even the twelve would not forsake Him? That in doing this He adopted the supremely right and best course of action, we hold to be beyond doubt. After such a manifestation of the feelings and desires of the multitude as had just been displayed in the endeavour to take Him by force and make Him king, Jesus could not have continued in the course He had hitherto pursued without constant danger of a popular rising in His favour—an event which would undoubtedly have been fatal to the success of the work He was bent on accomplishing. The popular hopes and expectations concerning the Messiah, had He not taken such effectual means to damp them,

would have more and more centred in Him, and would have more and more hindered the reception, by the minds of those who listened to Him, of the good seed of the Kingdom of God which it was His chief object to sow.

It was absolutely necessary that He should make it indubitably plain, to all who looked to Him to gratify such hopes and expectations, that He had no sympathy whatever with them, and was determined on accomplishing an entirely different work. Nevertheless, even if we admit that, to such a Mind and Spirit as His, the temptation which the occasion presented of reconsidering His resolutions, and adopting the method of founding His kingdom which He had previously rejected, offered no attractions—perhaps never crossed His mind at all—(an admission which of itself is one of the highest tributes we can give to His Character and aims)—the resolution with which He undertook the hard, stern duty of enlightening and disillusioning His many sympathisers and friends; the confident reliance on God which that act implied, and the splendid courage He displayed in gathering up the few poor genuine fruits of His previous work which the crisis left to Him, and in setting Himself to tread the only path which remained open to Him—these traits in His Character are beyond all praise. Dauntless in His loyalty to God and truth, He proved that popularity had not spoilt Him, and that adversity could not appall Him; He proved Himself once more to be the strong Son of God—the one Man whose meat and drink it ever was to do the will of His Father in Heaven.

And let us not forget that this crisis did put His Divine Manhood to the proof—as indeed it was continually being put to the proof, during every day and hour of His life.

Unless we hold conceptions concerning His Nature which are irreconcilable with the fundamental fact of His true Humanity, we are bound to recognise that He was free, in this crisis, to act in any way that the circumstances permitted.

It was His loyalty to duty, and His love for God and man which prompted Him to act in the way in which He did. It lay altogether within His power either to take advantage of the opportunity which now presented itself, of posing as a patriot, and taking the place of leader in a revolt against the hated Roman yoke—or, to temporise, and so if possible avoid, or, at any rate, postpone the crisis. He was, we repeat, perfectly free to act. It was due entirely to the Divine quality of His Spirit that He acted as He did. He *would* not be untrue to Himself and to God. With amazing wisdom, He saw the exactly right and true course of action to adopt, and with amazing strength of will, and with matchless fidelity, He proceeded forthwith to do it. Thus once more, in new and difficult circumstances, He proved Himself the wise, faithful, obedient, perfect Son, with whom the Father was—indeed, could not fail to be—well pleased.

In this endeavour to unfold the Character of the Man Jesus, as it reveals itself in this important crisis of His life which we have been considering, we are met by a difficulty which we have previously felt in dealing with other incidents of His career. It is a

difficulty which all those who attempt to apprehend His Mind and Spirit cannot but feel, and is in itself the supreme proof of His Divine perfection. We feel the impossibility of doing anything like justice to His Godlike Character by any synthetic study of the various incidents which the Gospels record. In dealing with any other character with which History furnishes us, we can, with a fair amount of accuracy, define its limits, point to its defects,

> "Put our finger on the place
> And say, 'thou ailest here and here.'"

But in dealing with the Character of Jesus we feel this to be impossible. We cannot point to any bias disturbing its perfect balance; we cannot point to any flaw or weakness impairing its perfection. We cannot even point to any virtue or excellence which, by being in excess, can be construed into a defect, and be pointed at as marring the perfect symmetry of the whole.

He is always master of Himself, and master of the situation in which He finds Himself. He always acts in the supremely wise and right way,—without hesitation, without ostentation, apparently without effort, as if it were simply the one and only way in which it were possible to act under the circumstances. He always responds fully to the call of duty, so willingly, so naturally, that duty never seems to fetter His perfect freedom of action. He never allows His courage to lead Him into rashness. He never allows His faith to lead Him into presumption. He is pitiful, and full of compassion, in the presence of sickness

and suffering, but never weak in the way in which He yields to those impulses,—never overmastered by them. He can speak the tenderest words to sinners convicted of their sin, and most encouraging words to men and women anxious to live nobler and better lives; but He never, by word or look, causes men to feel otherwise than that sin is exceeding sinful; and, when occasion demands, He can show Divine anger at the hardness of men's hearts, and can denounce, in most scathing language, hypocrisy and wrong doing.

And in this crisis, none of these marks of surpassing greatness which, on the other occasions of His life we have considered, we have found Him to possess, are wanting. He acted exactly in the wisest and best way in this difficult crisis—the only way in which an entirely true and faithful man, burdened with such a mission as His, could act in such circumstances, and remain true to Himself, and to Him who had sent Him.

Viewing His career from a standpoint from which we can regard it as a whole, this fact becomes indubitably plain. The Spirit of the Cross—the Spirit of a Man who had determined to devote Himself to the salvation of men in the one highest and best way, by leading them to God and goodness, and who shrank from no sacrifice in order to accomplish that divine purpose—pervades, determines His whole conduct throughout this crisis.

But just because this is the case, it becomes impossible by any synthesis to do justice to a Spirit so unimaginably, so superhumanly divine.

When we have pointed out the courage, the wisdom, the loyalty, the self-sacrifice, the singleness of aim, the indomitable faith in God, and, we must add, in humanity also, which His conduct on this occasion reveals, we feel that we have done but little to unfold its rounded perfection. All these qualities are displayed, and many more could be brought out by a more subtle and exhaustive inquiry; but after all our efforts, we should feel that we were as far as ever from a complete and satisfying representation of the true Character and Spirit of the Man. Every fresh attempt to accomplish this task convinces us that it cannot be accomplished. It is within our power to apprehend much of His unexampled excellence and worth, but to comprehend the grace and truth which He manifested in their fulness, is impossible.

But when we have come to recognise,—when we have felt ourselves forced to confess—this, can we hesitate in the use of any language, however clear and explicit, which declares that such a Soul must rank on an equality with Him who, in the words of a distinguished modern writer*, "is identical with *our Highest*, the supreme term in the hierarchy of spiritual natures; blending in Himself the superlatives of all that we reverence as great and good; the eternal life of moral perfection?" Does not the language of the apostle John seem altogether appropriate when he says of this Man, "the Life was manifested . . . the eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested to us"; or that of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "God's Son . . . who was the

* Martineau, "Study of Religion. Vol. II., p. 42.

effulgence of His glory and the very image of His substance"?

Are we not compelled to endorse the confession of Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"?

## CHAPTER IX.

### HE SET HIS FACE STEADFASTLY.

(Luke ix. 51.)

AFTER the Galilean crisis Jesus was compelled to make a large change in His methods of work. Having by His attitude in this crisis struck a fatal blow at His popularity, it was useless for Him to attempt to carry on His work on the old lines. Consequently we find that He avoided publicity as much as possible during the remainder of the time He spent in the north of Palestine. From this time forth He almost entirely ceased to teach the multitudes, and to work miracles in public. He travelled about from place to place with His disciples—we read of His going to Tyre and Sidon, then to Cæsarea Philippi, then we find Him in Decapolis—but no longer as the popular Teacher. His journeys are made with the view to avoid notice, and to enable Him in quiet to instruct those who remained true to Him. This was the chief work to which He now devoted Himself—the work of making the few followers who clave to Him better acquainted with the real character of His mission, and

the true nature of the Kingdom which, as God's Messiah, He was going to establish in the world.

It is in accordance with this design that we find Him now plainly intimating to His disciples that He is about to suffer and die. Again and again we find Him telling them most explicitly what is about to happen to Him. "Let these words sink into your ears," He said to them only a few hours after the transfiguration, "for the Son of Man shall be delivered up into the hands of men." "But," says the candid Evangelist, "they understood not this saying, and it was concealed from them that they should not perceive it." (Luke ix. 44, 45.)

The chronology of the Gospels is so uncertain, that it is impossible to decide how long Jesus remained in the north after the Capernaum crisis; and it is extremely difficult to decide whether He visited Jerusalem yet once more, and returned again to Galilee, before the time when "He steadfastly set His face," to go up there for the last time. The account of the "secret" visit to the capital which we find in John vii., is difficult to reconcile with the last journey through Samaria recorded by Luke.* On the other hand there is no account in the Synoptic Gospels of this previous visit, and John (x. 22), by omitting all mention of a return to Galilee, seems to imply that Jesus remained in, or near, Jerusalem during the time which elapsed between the Feast of Tabernacles and the Feast of the Dedication. It is not necessary, however, for the

* Though Neander suggests that such a reconciliation is possible. *Cf.* "Life of Christ," p. 332. Bohn's Edition.

purpose we have in view, to attempt to decide this question. It is simply necessary to point out that, in either the summer or autumn of the year before His death,* Jesus turned his back on Galilee for the last time, and "steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." (Luke ix. 51.) It is evident that He fully realised the importance of this step. He knew that to go to Jerusalem meant death. It is not at all necessary to assume that He had any supernatural knowledge of the fate that awaited Him. He must have foreseen, as early at least as the time of His great travail of Spirit in the wilderness, to what end the path of life which His Father required Him to tread would lead. The Shadow of Death must always have accompanied Him during His public career; not at first intruding itself on His notice, or greatly occupying His attention, yet plainly discerned by Him at any rate as early as the time of His visit to Nazareth, and yet more plainly when the Galilean crisis came—becoming at last His constant companion, as it became evident to Him that Judea was even more hostile to Him than Galilee, and that if He were not to remain a wanderer, and to renounce, or at least, leave incomplete, His purpose of devoting Himself to the salvation of the nation, He must go to Jerusalem to die.

When we recognise the fact that not only did Jesus plainly foresee the consequences of His going to Jerusalem, but also that He must have been aware that it was not His only alternative—that other courses of

* As the journey through Samaria was a leisurely one, He must have started on it some considerable time before the Feast which He purposed attending.

action were possible,—and when we realise how seductive some of those other paths must have appeared, and how easily He might have persuaded Himself (or at least any other man might) into thinking that to go to Jerusalem was not the right and best course to adopt—then, and then only, shall we be in a position to recognise the sublimity of this act of His, and to realise what the Mind and Spirit must have been of Him who could thus steadfastly resolve to go to certain death.

In making this resolve He voluntarily took the first step towards death. The act involved both the clear recognition of the fact that this path was the path of duty, and also the deliberate choice of that path; and, the more we ponder it, the more shall we be amazed, both at the spiritual intuition which He displayed in discerning that that hard path was the one His Father desired Him to tread—the one whereby alone the world's salvation could be accomplished—and at the sublime submission and self-renunciation which the treading of it involved.

It is not easy for readers of the Gospels to do full justice to the wonderful insight into duty which Jesus Christ displayed in determining on this course. Nor is it easy to realise the strength of the temptation by which He must have been assailed, to avoid the fate which awaited Him at Jerusalem, and consequently, the strength of will with which His rejection of the alternatives offered to Him compels us to credit Him.

For, regarding this resolution of His—as we cannot easily avoid doing—in the light of His death and resur-

rection, we see it so splendidly justified—we recognise so clearly that the path He chose *was* the right and best path—that it is difficult for us to place ourselves in the position in which He stood when He made the resolve; difficult to realise how strange and hard a path it must have appeared to Him, in the prime of His manhood, and with the wide world open to Him. If indeed we regard Him—as He too commonly has been regarded, rather as an actor, dramatising a prearranged scheme of redemption, than as a living, responsible Man, working out slowly, and step by step, His own complete salvation, and thereby accomplishing the salvation of the world, we need not try to overcome these difficulties; for in that case we cannot admit that the path He chose did seem strange to Him, or that any other alternative seriously occupied His thoughts.

But the Christ of many men's preconceptions—the Christ who was always conscious of the fulness of His Godhead; who always foresaw clearly the exact course of His career; who always had in view the destiny and scheme of the Cross; who never laboured under any perplexity as to the course He should take; —such a Christ is not the Christ of the Gospels. The Christ of the Gospels is a Man who did not always live in the full consciousness of what He really was; did not always clearly foresee what was His Father's will for Him, or why that will was right; was in all points tempted like as we are; loved, hoped, feared, willed, as we do, with all the energy and responsibility of manhood; howbeit of manhood animated by a perfectly disinterested love, and consecrated to a per-

fectly unselfish purpose, and regulated by a perfectly balanced, and God-magnetised will.*

It is this Man into whose Mind we are endeavouring to get some insight; and in order to see it clearly, and without prejudice, in the light in which this incident reveals it, we must endeavour, as far as possible, to regard the step which He took on this occasion apart from its outcome; and must strive to realise how difficult it must have been for Him to see what was the path of duty, and how hard to resolve to tread it.

He was, we must remember, at this time only three and thirty. He had only been about His Father's business some three years, and only in one little corner of the world. Could it be possible that it was the Father's will that He should die; so young; so little work done; so many methods of work untried; so many ripe harvest-fields unreaped? Was it not much more probable, in view of these considerations, that the right path lay *away* from Jerusalem, not towards it; that the voice within Him, urging Him to go up, was the voice of the tempter, and not the voice of God? Could He not perform the work His Father had given Him to do better by living than by dying—by retiring to the desert, and there completing the training of those who had remained faithful to Him; or by going to the Gentiles, and at least making

* The reader will find the same thought in Dr. Forsyth's "Religion in Recent Art," p. 213 (1889 Ed.). We have ventured to make use of some of Dr. Forsyth's language in the above paragraph; but in a way which does not readily permit of acknowledgment by quotation marks.

certain that they would give Him no better reception than His countrymen?

Some such thoughts and doubts—natural, inevitable under the circumstances—must have passed through His Mind, and perplexed His Spirit. Indeed, we are not without direct evidence both that the great world with its great needs, which lay outside the limits of His country, was often in His thoughts; and also that it was not without a struggle, probably more than once renewed, that He put aside the temptation to avoid the fate which awaited Him at Jerusalem.

"Other sheep I have which are not of this fold," He said on one occasion; and when, during the last week of His life, some Greeks requested an interview with Him, the request seems to have brought vividly to His Mind all the possibilities which lay open to Him in the heathen world, in contrast to the darkness of the hour which was at hand, and His Soul was troubled; and it was only by prayer, by falling back on the conviction that it undoubtedly was His Father's will that He should face that hour, and by meditating on the unique results which He was fully convinced, in His moments of clearest foresight, that His death would achieve, that He succeeded in regaining His calm.

But though we are compelled to believe that alternatives to the step which Jesus took, when He "steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem," must have presented themselves to His Mind, and in so tempting a form that the path of duty was not easy to discover,—this fact only brings into stronger relief the sublime perfection of His Spirit—the marvellous

clearness with which He discerned what was the Will of the Father, and the resolute, unswerving obedience which He accorded to it.

As was the case during His wrestlings in the wilderness, so now; He was tempted, but He never for one moment yielded to the temptation. His one desire being to do the will of His Father, He was enabled—it is the supreme instance of the way in which duty becomes plain to him who with his whole soul desires to do it—to unmask the temptation, and to attain to absolute certainty as to what God's will for Him was. And so, resolutely, unswervingly, convinced that that path, however hard and strange, was the right path for Him to tread, He "steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." And though, ere He had trodden it to the end, His soul was more than once troubled, and the desire surged strong within Him that the hour might pass, that the cup might be removed from His lips, He was disturbed by no doubts as to whether He might not have mistaken His Father's will, and He never thought of attempting to save Himself from that hour —never dreamt of refusing to drink the cup. "Father, glorify Thy name," "Father, Thy will be done," was what alone He prayed; and when He recognised that it was His Father's steadfast purpose to glorify His name in that way, He submitted without a murmur, and calmly went to His death.

In considering the fact that Jesus, with marvellous spiritual insight, recognised that it was His duty to go up to Jerusalem to die, we come face to face with the difficult question; to what extent did He recognise

that this path was not only the path of duty, but the way to glory? How far did He foresee the unique results which His death would accomplish? to what extent was He conscious of the fact that, in order to crown and consummate His life and His mission, it was necessary that He should voluntarily surrender His life—that by that means alone He could fully reveal the Father-heart of His God to men, and could constrain a sinful world to believe on Him and be saved? When He thus steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and up to the time of His death, how far was He walking by faith, and how far by sight?

It may appear to some that such a distinct prediction of His death and resurrection as is recorded in Matt. xx. 17-19; and also such utterances as, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone, but if it die it beareth much fruit;" and, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto myself," give a decisive answer to these questions. And if these were the only records which we possessed of His thoughts and feelings with regard to this supreme event, we might accept the statement of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews; "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame," as an entirely true description of His attitude towards death, and of His fore-knowledge of its results.

But we must not forget that there is another side to the picture. For it is recorded that "He set His face *steadfastly*," which seems to imply that His

resolve to go to Jerusalem was not carried out without a strong effort of will; from which we infer that "the joy that was set before Him" was, to say the least, not more apparent to Him than the darkness and difficulty of the path He was called to tread. At any rate it seems to indicate a different state of feeling and expectation from that with which so many Christian martyrs have followed in His steps; and why, if He clearly foresaw the Crown beyond the Cross, should He have been less joyful, nay, eager, than they?

But, (not to insist too strongly on the inferences which it seems legitimate to draw from this description of His attitude) we must not forget that, as we have already indicated, we have records of two occasions, during the last week of His life, on which His soul was troubled at the thought of His approaching death: first when the Greeks desired an interview with Him; and again in the garden of Gethsemane, immediately before His arrest.

It seems quite impossible to reconcile either of these incidents (and more especially the latter) with the theory that Jesus clearly and uninterruptedly recognised how divinely right and good His Father's will for Him was, and foresaw the glorious results which would follow from His drinking of that bitter cup. Whatever were the causes which produced His agony, the narrative of it compels us to admit that, while it lasted, He was unable to realise—what He evidently did realise with wonderful clearness at times during this last period of His life—why it was necessary

that He should suffer and die, and what joy and glory awaited Him beyond the Gates of death. In that dark hour He could not *see*, He could only trust, that the will of the Father was good. Had it been otherwise—had any foreknowledge, or even any hope, of His resurrection and ascension been present in His mind—it is difficult, if not absolutely impossible, to account for His agony.* It seems doubtful, indeed, whether at any time between His agony and His death, His faith was supplemented by sight. His perfect calmness and self-possession were the results of perfect faith, not of anticipation of the "joy that was set before Him." His words to the malefactor: "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise," do not necessarily imply more than perfect confidence in His Father's wisdom and love—they do not imply that He knew where and what "paradise" would be. His exclamation, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," seems plainly to indicate that He did not realise the glorious resurrection that awaited Him; and His cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" could only have come from the lips of one in whom faith and hope were temporarily eclipsed.

When these facts are taken into account, the conclusion seems to be inevitable (and it is a conclusion to which the recognition of His true Humanity naturally leads us) that His feelings, and hopes, and anticipa-

* "He shows us the spectacle of a true man weighted with a crushing burden, the dread of a catastrophe awful and unfathomed. It was only because the future was not clear that He could pray, 'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me.'" Gore. Bampton Lectures, 1891.

tions with regard to the great sacrifice which God called Him to make, His insight into its necessity, His foresight of its results, fluctuated. At times He could speak calmly of "His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem," and could even confidently predict His resurrection; at other times He could anticipate without the least fear or shrinking His "going away," because He felt sure He was "going to the Father." But again, at other times, hope and confidence were dethroned by doubt and fear; the way in which the Father was leading Him seemed dark and dreadful; He had to fight for faith, to be content to simply trust; and for a time even faith drooped her wing, and His soul was anguished by the unendurable thought that God had forsaken Him.

If the above conclusion is correct; if it was only at times that Jesus was enabled to realise that, in calling Him to die, His Father was only asking Him to do what would divinely consummate His mission, and that He "would not leave His soul to Sheol nor suffer His Holy One to see corruption"—the path of duty at other times (perhaps we are justified in saying, for the most part) being strange and dark to Him; we shall have no great difficulty in realising what is implied in the statement of the Evangelist, "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem"—what sublime resolution and self-sacrifice the act demanded; what the tone and quality of His Spirit must have been, Who, when He recognised *that* as the will of the Father, straightway, without demur or hesitation, proceeded to do it.

For it enables us to give a rational answer to the

question which otherwise would be very difficult to answer: why did Jesus find it so hard to die? Why did even His trustful and confident Spirit shrink from that cup?

The answer only becomes clear in proportion as we recognise and do justice to the fact that He, in a real and not in a fictitious sense, partook of our humanity; and that, consequently, though His clear Mind and consecrated Spirit permitted Him not only an unerring recognition of the path of duty, but, at times, a wonderful insight into the perfect wisdom and beneficence of the Father's dealings with Him; and though He was enabled to attain, not unfrequently, to a height of hope so lofty that it is hardly distinguishable from clear foresight; yet He, like other men, walked by faith and not by sight. He, too, was subject to the fluctuations of mood and feeling to which all men are subject. His faith was sublime; His obedience was perfect; but He did not, could not, *know* whither God was leading Him; what would be the issue of His death; into what glorious life His flesh-hampered Spirit would blossom when the gates of death were passed. He could only hope and trust; and it was inevitable, in consequence, that sometimes, the hard, stern realities of His situation—the apparent failure of His mission, and the untimeliness and injustice of His fate, as well as the degradation and the physical agony which were involved in it—should present themselves so forcibly to His mind, that hope and confidence should be compelled temporarily to abdicate their sway, and faith itself should have to fight for life. We are far from saying that this gives a complete answer

to the question we have propounded. There is a mysterious element of anguish mingled with the cup which His Father placed to His lips, which it seems doubtful if the deepest thought and meditation can elucidate. That He, the Holy and Innocent One, the Well-beloved of the Father, who loved men and longed to save them, should, of all men, be despised, rejected, crucified—hated of men, and apparently forsaken by God! How strange! How hard to understand the weight of woe which rested on Him as He thus bore the sins of the world!

We will not attempt to fathom the mystery of that suffering. But it is a pertinent question to ask: could He have suffered at all, or at any rate to anything like the extent to which He evidently did suffer, had He realised clearly and continuously the purpose and outcome of His sufferings; "the glories which should follow them"? Could suffering and death have appeared fearful and dark to Him, unless the reason and necessity for the suffering were, to a great extent, at any rate, hidden from Him—unless the issue of His death was unknown, or at least only discerned by the eye of faith, and expected by the confidence of hope—faith, which cannot always see clearly through the mists of earth; hope, which cannot always uplift the sense-bound soul? Are we not entirely at a loss to understand why He should not have met death as joyfully and confidently as many of His martyrs have done, if we hold that He knew that beyond the Cross the glories of the Resurrection were awaiting Him, and that His brief hours of suffering would be followed by an eternity of honour, and would secure Him

the love and adoration of the whole human race? Could even the bearing of the sins of the whole world, —in any way in which it is conceivable that a holy and innocent Man, in whom the Father was always well-pleased, could have borne them—have been contemplated by Him with such fear and shrinking as to compel Him to pray that the cup might pass, if He had realised that by so doing He was accomplishing the salvation of the world, leading the hosts of humanity to the glory of the eternal life? We confidently answer, "No." He could not have known all this; though, as we have pointed out, there is evidence that His faith and hope in God enabled Him at times, with wonderful clearness, to anticipate that His sufferings and death would have a glorious outcome. He set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem; He resolutely refused to avoid the fate that awaited Him there; He endured the Cross, despising the shame, not because He knew that the path of duty was the way to glory, but simply because He recognised that it was the path of duty, and He would not refuse to tread it, even though it seemed to lead to utter loss.

We have felt compelled to discuss this question at some length; because, in order to realise the sublimity of the step He took in voluntarily going to Jerusalem to die, it is essential that we should endeavour to understand what were His thoughts and feelings with regard to it—in what light or lights He contemplated it. Unless we, to some extent, at any rate, understand *why* the way was dark and difficult for Him, we cannot understand *how* dark and difficult it was; and consequently we cannot justly and truly

appreciate the Spirit of the Man who resolved to tread it. An intelligent recognition of what made the way of the Cross a way of self-sacrifice is absolutely necessary, before a right estimate can be formed of the moral quality of the act which we are contemplating.

If the conclusions we have arrived at in the foregoing pages concerning the thoughts and feelings of Jesus be correct, there is no difficulty in thus realising why He needed to "steadfastly set His face." To such an one as we have depicted, even though His obedience was perfect, and His faith sublime, the way of the Cross could not but be dark and difficult; and it is because we think that it is quite possible to understand in a great measure why it was so dark and difficult, that we have, at such length, endeavoured to enter into His situation, and to view the circumstances from His standpoint.

It is, however, not on our attempted explanation of the situation that we wish to lay emphasis. It is a clear recognition of the Character of the Man, as He comes before us here, to which we chiefly desire to help our readers to attain.

As long as they intelligently recognise that this resolve of His to surrender His life in obedience to the will of His Father did involve a supreme renunciation of self,—that this call to go to Jerusalem to die did test His faith, His confidence in God, and His submissiveness to His will, to the utmost—it matters little whether they agree with our view of what constituted it a test and a self-renunciation. The realisation of the darkness and the difficulty of

the path He set His face, like a flint, to tread, is the key to the situation. That fact once realised, the Character of the Man, who so steadfastly set Himself to tread that hard path, at once becomes luminous.

No sooner did He clearly recognise that this was His Father's will for Him, than He, without hesitation or demur, proceeded to do it! That is the simple fact. And it is not possible to do adequate justice to such an unhesitating acceptance of such a supremely difficult duty. We all know what a vast difference there is between knowing what God's will is, and doing it. Jesus, we will not say, never recognised, but we will say, never, in any of His actions displayed, that difference. This is what makes the distance which separates Him from the rest of humanity incalculably great; this is what constituted Him the only begotten Son: with Him to know was to do.

Step by step, as His life unfolded, He kept adding to the proofs that He was the Son of God, by victoriously overcoming ever temptation to do His own will instead of His Father's; proved Himself superior to every inducement to swerve from the path of perfect obedience; still made it His meat and drink to do the will of God, even when He recognised that God's will was that He should go to Jerusalem to die! And so, the path which He was to tread having become plain to Him, and the days being well-nigh come that He should be received up, with a magnificent resolution and submission, to which no language can do adequate justice, He deliberately turned His face towards the city of His doom; He firmly suppressed His natural

craving for life; majestically waved aside the alluring temptation to save Himself, even for further service; crushed the hopes and longings which rose up within Him in opposition to such an heroic resolution—such a complete renunciation—in a word He sacrificed Himself utterly, in obedience to His Father's call; and by so doing, proved Himself equal to the severest test to which His Father could subject Him, and conclusively established His claim to be the Son of God, in whom the Father was ever well pleased.

No language, we repeat, can do justice to the heroic grandeur of this resolution, nor to the daily dying to self, and living to God which the carrying of it out involved. No words can adequately describe the quality of the Spirit of Him who was thus obedient even unto death. There is no parallel which we can draw with it in human history. The world has witnessed many heroic deeds, many acts of sublime self-sacrifice, but which of them all can we compare with this, of the lonely Jesus deliberately renouncing all hopes, joys, ambitions, preferences, and walking day by day unfalteringly to the terrible fate which He foresaw awaiting Him at Jerusalem—to desertion, rejection, stripes, insults, the Cross?

It is matchless, perfect, divine! "Of a truth," we are compelled once more to exclaim, "this was the Son of God."

## CHAPTER X.

### THE ARRIVAL AT JERUSALEM.

(Mark xi. 1-11, Matt. xxi. 1-17, Luke xix. 29-46.)

JESUS, as we have seen, having clearly recognised that it was His Father's will that He should go up to Jerusalem, though He plainly foresaw what was the fate which awaited Him there, with unhesitating obedience, set His face like a flint to perform that supremely difficult duty. Without haste, but without the least wavering, "He went on His way through cities and villages, teaching, and journeying on unto Jerusalem." (Luke xiii. 22.)

To any one less clear-sighted than He, the path which He had set himself to tread might, indeed, up to the very day on which Jerusalem was reached, have appeared anything but a difficult one, and any anticipations of desertion, rejection, and death, might have been lulled to sleep; for He was accompanied, at least during the latter part of the journey, by "a great multitude," the majority of whom were probably, like Himself, going to Jerusalem to the feast. (Mark x. 46.) The enthusiasm and excitement He aroused was as great as at any previous time during his Galilean ministry: it seemed as if He had regained all His early popularity. The news of His coming preceded Him, and the Pharisees, fearing the consequences of His arrival at the head of such an enthusiastic follow-

ing, made a vain attempt to stop Him. (Luke xiii. 31-33.) The answer which He returned them on this occasion might, if they had understood it, have convinced them that their fears were groundless. It indicates that Jesus knew well the worth, or rather the worthlessness, of this ebullition of popular feeling. He knew that it derived its strength from erroneous conceptions of His Messiahship, and was based on hopes and expectations concerning the course of action He would adopt, which it was quite impossible for Him to gratify. Knowing this, and for seeing how speedily it would be effectually damped by the course He had resolved to pursue, He suffered it to have its way; but He was not in the least misled by it, and it could not in any way have brightened, but, on the contrary, must have rendered additionally dark the prospect which lay before Him.

The popular enthusiasm reached its culminating point on the day of His entry into Jerusalem. This doubtless was partly due to the great miracle He had wrought in the raising of Lazarus; partly to the fact that, of the multitudes who were wending their way to the city, many, if not the majority, must have previously seen and heard Him, and were ready to eagerly welcome His reappearance; partly, perhaps, also to the thoughts and emotions which the sight of the famous city—the goal of their pilgrimage—could not fail to arouse in the minds of many.

Jesus quietly submitted to a demonstration which it would have been useless at that time to attempt to restrain. He even went some way towards encouraging it, by sending two of His disciples to procure an

ass's colt for Him to ride on, and by refusing the demand of some of the Pharisees that He should rebuke His disciples: "I tell you that if these should hold their peace," He replied, "the very stones will cry out." There could, however, have been nothing gratifying to Him in the demonstration itself, and little gladness in His heart as He rode along, surrounded by the acclaiming throng; foreseeing, as He must have done, that this same multitude who now shouted: "Hosanna! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Blessed is the Kingdom that cometh, the Kingdom of our Father David," would in a very few days be crying, "Crucify Him! crucify Him!" Still, He must have recognised an appropriateness in the way in which He, who claimed to be, and indeed knew Himself to be, a king, was thus conducted into the City of David; and, interpreting the acclaims of the people in a deeper sense than they had any conception of, He must have seen them to be a true proclamation and prophecy of the Kingdom of Heaven which He was establishing in the world.*

* Harnack thinks that Jesus, towards the later part of His career, publicly proclaimed himself the Messiah. He says: "Ultimately, when He thought well to reveal himself to the whole nation as the Messiah—how He came to the decision and carried it out are points in which we are left in the dark—He made His entry into Jerusalem as a king." ("What is Christianity?" p. 102. Eng. Trans.) And again:—"Such a story as that of Christ's entry into Jerusalem would have to be simply expunged, if the theory is to be maintained that He did not consider himself the promised Messiah, and also desire to be accepted as such." (*Ibid.*, pp. 131, 132.) His attitude towards the demonstration, as well as the acclamations of the multitude, certainly seem to demand such an explanation.

"And when He was come into Jerusalem," says Matthew, "all the city was stirred, saying, 'Who is this?' And the multitudes said, 'This is the prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth, of Galilee.'"

What did Jesus do when He arrived in the city? We are fortunately able to give a clear answer to this important question: important because the answer to it throws a wonderful light upon His Character, as well as enables us to understand the subsequent events of this fateful week. It explains the complete revulsion of feeling which took place among the multitudes concerning Him; why those who hailed Him with Hosannas on this occasion, made no attempt to rescue Him when, a few days later, they saw Him a helpless prisoner in the hands of His enemies, but, on the contrary, clamoured for His death.

It is to Mark that we are indebted for a brief statement concerning the course which Jesus adopted on this eventful afternoon after His arrival in the city, which enables us clearly to realise the whole situation: the Man and the hour are thereby illuminated, and the events which followed are rendered perfectly intelligible.

"He entered into Jerusalem, into the temple," says Mark (xi. 11), "*and when He had looked round about on all things, it being now eventide, He went out unto Bethany with the twelve.*"

If we had not this statement of Mark—followed up by the account of the cleansing of the temple on the succeeding day—we should have been inclined to think—following the narratives of Matthew and Luke—that Jesus set about the task of cleansing the temple immediately on His arrival.

But not only the indications that the account in Mark is that of an eye-witness,* but a consideration of the probabilities, leads us to accept this Evangelist's narrative as the correct one. When the situation is realised, we are obliged to admit that it is very improbable that Jesus proceeded immediately to the work of cleansing the temple. He was in fact, we shall see, compelled to do just what Mark records Him to have done, and no more than that; *i.e.*, to simply "look round about on all things."

The city, it must be borne in mind, was crowded with people who had come up to the feast. And of this crowd, there was hardly a man who was not animated by an intense patriotism, and also by what was a necessary corollary to that patriotism—an intense hatred of the Roman yoke. It was often only with the greatest difficulty that the Roman Governor could preserve order on these occasions. The tumult which arose about Paul, of which we have a record in Acts (xxi., xxii.), shows how easily the city was thrown into an uproar. On more than one occasion, we know that a popular outbreak was only suppressed by ruthless bloodshed.

The electrical condition of the social atmosphere was, moreover, immensely intensified by the almost universal expectation that the long-expected Messiah was at hand—that He might at any moment come forward and declare Himself, and lead the nation to victory over her foes. More than one man during this period of the nation's history, prompted by ambi-

* *Cf.* the account of the finding of the colt (v. 4) and the note of the time, "It being now eventide."

tion or misled by delusions, actually took advantage of this hope and expectation—proclaimed himself to be the Messiah, and headed a revolt.

It is hardly necessary to point out that, blinded by the letter of the ancient prophecies, the people did not dream that the Messiah would come otherwise than as a conquering king; did not dream that His kingdom would be anything else than a kingdom "of this world." But they were ready to follow with the utmost devotion, and at a moment's notice, a leader giving far fewer proofs of power than Jesus had given, if only he would adopt the attitude which harmonised with their preconceptions, and substantiate his claims by an appeal to arms.

Such then was the state of the popular feeling; and we can easily understand how the arrival of Jesus, in such a public and apparently ostentatious way, must have aroused expectation to the highest pitch.

Nearly everybody must have known, or at least have heard of Him. Many really believed Him to be the Messiah; many more were only waiting to believe —waiting until He should come forward and declare Himself, in a way which coincided with their ideas and hopes. And when He rode into the city, accompanied by the crowds who hailed Him king, thousands of hearts must have throbbed with eager expectation; multitudes must have felt certain that at last the long-expected hour was come. The situation was indeed most thrilling, and most critical. A word would have sufficed. He had only to come forward and cry: "To arms, all lovers of your country! I am your Messiah; down with the foreign tyrant," and a thou-

sand swords would have flashed from their scabbards; tens of thousands of voices would have hailed Him king; hundreds of thousands in a few days would have flocked to His standard, and would have followed Him to what, with such a leader, must have been certain victory.

And He, what did He do? He did *nothing*, uttered no word, gave no sign! True to the wise and noble resolution He had taken in the wilderness, He let this supreme opportunity for founding an earthly kingdom pass: He simply went to the temple and "looked round about on all things," and then, "It being now eventide," retired to Bethany with the twelve.

The light in which the Character of Jesus stands revealed by the incident is perfectly dazzling in its brightness. His self-renunciation, His strength of will, His loyalty to those noblest ideals which animated Him throughout His life, His submission to the will of the Father, are all seen to be perfect.

If Cæsar, on that night when he stood long in doubt on the banks of the Rubicon, had decided to renounce his ambition, and to spare his country all the horrors which, as he well knew, were bound to ensue if he crossed that stream; if Napoleon, animated by motives as noble and disinterested, had declined to fire off that "whiff of grapeshot" which was preliminary to Austerlitz, and Jena, the Moscow retreat, and Leipsic, and Waterloo, these self-renunciations would have deserved the world's highest praise. But what Cæsar and Napoleon might have done sinks into insignificance beside the spectacle of what Jesus actually

did on this occasion. With a far more splendid opportunity than they had ever had of becoming the conqueror of the world, He would not take advantage of it. He walked in silence round the temple, while thousands watched His every movement, and eagerly waited for the expected word, and then, to their intense disappointment and disgust, retired at nightfall from the city, with that word still unspoken.

Without doubt, it was this refusal of His to justify the popular expectation which sealed His fate—which led the multitude a few days later to clamour for His death. The revulsion of popular feeling was instantaneous and almost complete. There remained, for a day or two, enough of lingering belief and hope in Him to enable Him to cleanse the temple without opposition, and to make the chief priests and rulers afraid to arrest Him openly; but as day after day passed, and He still gave no sign, the last remnants of His popularity faded away; and when the multitude, a few days afterwards, saw Him alone and helpless in the power of the authorities, they were so thoroughly disappointed in Him, and so incensed at His (to them) stupid and unpatriotic conduct, that they were almost as eager as their rulers to have Him crucified.

Most grand and most pathetic, when we thus come to realise its significance, is the picture which is here presented to us of Him who was indeed the Messiah the nation was so anxiously expecting, silently "looking round about on all things"—*compelled* to be silent; reduced to powerlessness, by the blindness and sinfulness of the nation He longed to save.

He was, as we well know, animated by a nobler patriotism than even the noblest of those who watched Him had any conception of; His heart was bursting with desire and longing to save His people. That very day, Luke tells us (xix. 42) He had wept when He beheld the city, lamenting that it "knew not the things that belong to peace." But His conception of salvation was not theirs. He knew that the throwing off of the Roman yoke would not help them on one step towards securing that spiritual salvation which alone would make them free indeed. And so He steadfastly refused to take such action as would alone, in their eyes, be a justification of His claims. They, on the other hand, would not consent to be saved in any way but their own. Separated thus by an impassable gulf, what more could He do for them? What hope of winning them by further teaching, by further witness-bearing to the truth? His mission was ended.

Two alternatives alone remained; the one, such as any man but He would, we venture to think, have deemed the right one to adopt under the circumstances—for which, if He had adopted it, who would have dared to judge Him?—was to leave Bethany the next morning, and instead of returning to Jerusalem, to go and seek the "other sheep not of that fold" in the wide realms of the Roman Empire—to say to His disciples, "I can do nothing more for this people, they are so blind and prejudiced that I am powerless to save them; come, let us try Alexandria or Rome!" (and there was nothing at that time, nor indeed up to the very night of His arrest, to prevent Him from putting such a plan into execution, nothing but His

sense of duty and His amazing love):—the other—magnificent in its conception beyond the power of all language to describe, unparalleled in its boldness, a perfect, divine idea, which only One perfectly divine could have conceived, which only a perfect Son of God could have dared to carry out (for it was based on a confidence in God, in the power of the truth, and in human nature as capable of recognising and willing to respond to the truth, which was nothing short of perfect; and it demanded for its execution a perfect self-sacrifice, and implied a fathomless love)—the other alternative was to bear final witness to the truth—to give a final proof of His willingness, His yearning desire, to save the people who refused to be saved by Him—*by dying for them:* to consummate His mission so!

We know which alternative He chose. Not that His choice was made for the first time on that memorable afternoon: we have seen that He had long foreseen His duty and His fate; but that afternoon He irrevocably confirmed it. He could not consent to save His people in the way in which they wished to be saved; their doom as a nation was fixed. But He could and would die for them, and so pave the way—not only for them, but for the whole world—to that true salvation which He had all along offered, and which it was His mission to accomplish. And so, while they drifted on to the horrors of the war with Titus, and of the destruction of Jerusalem,—to national extinction and age-long retribution—He went to His Cross, and to His eternal seat on the right hand of the Father.

Let us not, however, by anticipating the outcome of

the divine conception and resolve which guided Him in the course He pursued on this occasion, lose sight of the actual situation. Let us remember that the Cross was still before Him; let us remember how dark and difficult the way of the Cross appeared to Him; how, though His duty was clear, faith and hope did not always keep His Spirit from being troubled at the thought of the "hour" which was so fast approaching—did not, we have seen, always permit Him to indulge in confident anticipation of what lay beyond that hour. Only by bearing this in mind can we realise the grandeur of His attitude on this occasion, and do justice to the sublime self-sacrifice and steadfastness which He displayed. If His Spirit had been marred by the least taint of self-seeking; if His knowledge of God's will, and His loyalty to it, had not both been perfect; if His confidence in His Father had not been absolutely firm; if His love had not been fathomless; then surely He would either have succumbed to the great temptation—would have renounced His ideals, and seized this supreme opportunity of self-aggrandisement, persuading Himself that "vox populi" could not be otherwise than "vox Dei" (what presumption! to deem Himself right and the whole nation wrong!)—or He would have adopted the other alternative which lay open to Him, and that night have shaken off the dust of the doomed city from His feet, and left His deluded and ungrateful countrymen for ever.

He did neither. He went to the temple and silently "looked round about Him on all things"; not one whit shaken in His convictions, in His loyalty, or in

His faith, by the popular excitement and expectation. He went out at eventide to Bethany; but only to return in the morning, and morning after morning, to the city; courting death, till death came.

Is it possible to conceive of, or imagine a course of conduct nobler or wiser than that which Jesus pursued on this occasion? Is it possible to conceive of, or imagine, a truer, more self-sacrificing, diviner Man? Is not such manhood as this perfect, ideal?—such manhood as God Himself alone could have begotten—such manhood as a Son of God alone could have realised in life?

Our meditation on the Character of the Man as it is revealed to us by this incident, would hardly be complete, did we not endeavour to penetrate beneath this silent "looking round" of His, and to read the meaning of His looks. What, let us reverently ask, were the feelings and emotions stirring in that noble heart as He "looked round about on all things"?

The looks of Jesus on several occasions are recorded by the Evangelists, and on two occasions the feelings which prompted them are recorded also.

He looked round about on the self-righteous and bigoted Pharisees who sat watching Him in the synagogue, to see if He would dare to heal the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath day (Luke vi. 10, Mark iii. 5). Luke simply records the fact that He looked on them, but Mark tells us that it was "with anger."

Again, He is recorded to have looked on the rich young man who came to Him asking what He should do to inherit eternal life, and who went away sorrowful

when He was told to sell all His possessions. The incident is recorded by all the Synoptists, but it is Mark alone who tells us; "Jesus, looking on Him, loved him." (Mark x. 21.)

Besides these two occasions, we are told of three others in which His looks were noted, and we can without difficulty surmise the emotions which they depicted.

He looked up to Heaven as He blessed and broke the loaves with which He fed the five thousand in the desert (Matt. xiv. 19,—Mark vi. 41,—Luke ix. 16), with a look which must have expressed thankfulness and trust. He looked on His disciples when they were astonished at His saying: "how hardly can they who have riches enter into the kingdom of Heaven" (Mark x. 27), and that look must have been one of tender pity for their ignorance, and of loving desire to enlighten them.

He "turned and looked upon Peter"—reproachfully, yet with pity and love—with a look which went straight to Peter's heart—when the cock crew after he had three times denied Him, by the fire, in the court of the High-priest's house. (Luke xxii. 61.) We may add, though the fact is not distinctly recorded by the Evangelist, that it was apparently because shame and anger affected Him too strongly to permit Him for a time either to speak or look, that "He stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground," when the Pharisees brought to Him the woman taken in adultery. (John viii. 6.) Then, when they continued asking Him for His verdict, what a look that must have been which He gave them as "He lifted

up Himself and said unto them, 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.'"!

These recorded instances of the looks of Jesus will perhaps enable us to understand the varied emotions which were portrayed in those looks of His which He directed "round about on all things," on the occasion we are considering. Varied emotions they must have been, for the sights which met His gaze as He traversed the temple that afternoon—the excited multitudes, the malignant Pharisees, the unseemly traffic in the temple courts, the splendid buildings (doomed, as He knew, to destruction), and all the business and tumult of the great city at feast time—must have aroused within Him nearly every feeling of which a noble heart is capable.

Stern looks, expressing the righteous wrath which, on the following day, moved Him to such energetic action, must have been those which He directed at the buyers and sellers who were turning the house of prayer into a market, and a den of robbers. He found, even as Isaiah had prophesied, "Iniquity and the solemn assembly"—"wickedness and worship"—going hand in hand; and He could not look upon it without being moved to anger. This must have been the feeling which largely predominated at first; and probably it was the majestic sternness of His looks and mien, as He walked in silence through the temple courts, which overawed both friends and foes—effectually preventing the former from continuing the demonstration in His favour, and the latter from offering any opposition to His progress, or to His withdrawal to Bethany at eventide.

But the Man who only a few hours previously had shed tears of sorrow and pity, because the city He beheld "knew not the things which belong unto peace;" the Man who, a few days later, on the road to Calvary, turned to the weeping women who followed Him and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children," could not have been simply moved to righteous anger, as He looked round about on all things. The deepest fountains of sorrow and pity must have been stirred within Him by the sights which presented themselves to His gaze, and by the thoughts which they suggested to Him.

This splendid temple, how soon it would become a heap of ruins! These busy, thoughtless multitudes, how little they suspected the fate that awaited them! And, oh the pity of it! that He should be there, longing to save them, longing to lift them up to the life which is life indeed, and that they, blind, foolish, and sinful, should refuse His salvation, and prefer to kill Him rather than renounce their prejudices and reform their lives! "They will not come to me that they may have life," "they have seen and hated both me and my Father." Thus He must have meditated as He looked around that afternoon; and sorrow and pity must have mingled with His anger, as these thoughts came to Him, and must have paved the way for the expression in His looks of what, we are justified in confidently asserting, was, on this occasion, as on every occasion, the deepest and most constant feeling of His matchless heart—the feeling of holy, divine, immeasurable Love.

Yes, Love! That after all must have been the emotion which those looks of His most clearly expressed. The looks of anger, of sorrow, and of pity, which He directed round about on all things as He traversed the temple courts, must have become merged ere long in one deep, set expression of countenance; unintelligible and awe-inspiring to His foes, and scarcely less so to His disciples and friends; the indescribable, unimaginable look of Him who loved these foolish, perverse, sinful men and women with a love which was stronger than death; the divine look of Him who had resolved *to die* for the nation which had seen and hated both Him and His Father.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE DEATH.

(Matt. xxvi. 14—xxvii. 56. Mark xiv. 10—xv. 41. Luke xxii. 1—xxiii. 49. John xviii. 1—xix. 37.)

WE have now to contemplate the Mind and Spirit of Jesus as they reveal themselves in that supremely important event which brought His career to a close—His death by crucifixion.

It is an event which can be contemplated from many different points of view, but which arrests attention and demands explanation from whatever standpoint it may be regarded. Even if we confine our attention to its "natural" aspects—if we regard it simply as the closing act of the life of the *Man* Jesus—we cannot but acknowledge that it is an event of surpassing interest and importance.

So striking and significant is the fact that Jesus' life had such a termination, that no thoughtful man can rest content with the bare recognition of the fact.

It cannot be contemplated with any seriousness without giving birth to the conviction—a conviction which steadily grows the longer the fact is contemplated—that here is an event which for depth of meaning has not its equal in the whole range of history. And that conviction will not owe its strength

mainly to the fact that the death of Jesus has become the corner-stone of Christian teaching, and has produced such unparalleled results in every age, and in every sphere of human life, since it was accomplished. The deed itself, quite independently of the results which have flowed from it, suggests—nay, compels reflection. In pondering it, we shall find ourselves brought face to face with some of the greatest mysteries and the profoundest problems of life. "Why," we find ourselves compelled to ask, "was this the end of a life so pure, so wondrously full of grace and truth? Why did One so wise, and so supremely gifted, permit Himself to be taken prisoner, and put to death by His enemies? What was the spirit which prompted Him to adopt this remarkable course of action? What were the motives by which He was influenced? What is the quality of this deed of the Cross? Does it harmonise with the rest of that divine life? Does it crown and consummate it?"

We have not to search long for answers to at least some of these questions; answers which place the quality of the deed, at any rate, beyond dispute. We cannot read the Gospel narratives of Jesus' Passion without being constrained to acknowledge that they record the divinest deed of a Life which was throughout divinely lovely with "the loveliness of perfect deeds."

We can unhesitatingly assert that the deed of the Cross was the crowning work of His life—the consummation of His work. The other events of His life which we have considered in these pages have afforded us deep and precious glimpses into His Mind and

Spirit; but, for depth of meaning and significance—as expressions of the tone and quality of the life which He manifested—they cannot be compared with this one. His death is the one act of His life in which His Mind and Spirit are *fully* revealed. It epitomises and clearly expresses all that He was. It completes and perfects that revelation of Character which we have in Him—that perfect manifestation of divine manhood which the men of faith, in all the ages since, have joyfully recognised and accepted as the perfect and satisfying revelation of the Life and Character of God.

This being so, it is supremely difficult to deal with this event of Jesus' life satisfactorily. An adequate and exhaustive treatment of such a theme is impossible. We cannot comprehend Him "in Whom it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell," as that fulness is manifested in the Cross. No human lens can catch and focus all the light which shines from that diamond deed of many facets. We can apprehend something of the meaning which it carries in it, in some of the aspects in which it presents itself to us; but we can never declare: "this is all that it means."

This, doubtless, is more particularly the case with the Godward aspects of the deed of the Cross. The Cross has invariably been recognised by Christians as the sign and seal of the completely accomplished atonement which Jesus Christ has effected between God and man. But eighteen centuries of Christian thinking on this wondrous theme has failed to exhaust it. Each and every theory yet propounded

of the nature of the atonement has, sooner or later, been found to be inadequate. Some of these theories have indeed met with a wide acceptance, and have dominated the minds of men for generations; but we are as far off as ever from a theory on this great subject which shall satisfy the mind of Christendom as completely as, for instance, the undulating theory of light, or the Darwinian theory, has satisfied the minds of scientists.

In view of this fact, the reader may think us presumptuous in attempting any exposition of this most difficult theme. Indeed, he may fairly urge that to do so is to go beyond the limits within which the writer is pledged to confine himself in these pages.

We reply, and we trust that the reader will, before he has completed the perusal of this chapter, acknowledge that the plea is a just and sufficient one—that it is impossible adequately to grasp the meaning and significance of the death of Jesus—as long as we keep within the limits of "that which is natural."

We shall endeavour to confine ourselves within these limits as long as possible; for we feel that there is some need for the attempt to be made to unfold the meaning of the crowning event of Jesus' life on the lines we have attempted to follow in the previous pages. Countless volumes have been written on the Godward aspect of the death of Jesus Christ, volumes in which, as in the "Imitation of Christ," it is assumed that, in the Cross, every possible grace and virtue are manifested in highest perfection; but very few books, so far as we are aware, are to be found in which the attempt has been made to draw in full the

portrait of the suffering and dying Man, and thereby to reveal the dazzling splendour of the glory of divine manhood which radiates from His Cross.

Many will reply that this is because such an attempt is superfluous—that the glory is so manifest that no magnifying-glass is required to enable us to see it. This doubtless is true. And yet, a clear and intelligent apprehension of its surpassing glory cannot be attained to by a mere look, or even by a prolonged gaze, unless, while thus gazing, we note, not merely the general effect, but the details by which that effect is produced. Either synthesis or analysis—the one or the other according to the standpoint which we take in contemplating this amazing deed—is absolutely necessary, if our apprehension of its meaning is to be clear and intelligent.

The synthetic method is the one which we have adopted in these pages; and, in endeavouring to follow it in our contemplation of the death of Jesus, we necessarily begin with "that which is natural;" and, as we have just said, we shall keep in that region as long as we find it possible.

But we warn the reader at the outset that we shall find it impossible to confine ourselves to that region when we come to consider the weighty question: why was it necessary that Jesus should die? We shall find that an adequate reason for that necessity can only be discovered when, taking the step of faith, we pass into "that which is spiritual," and regard Him not only as the Son of Man, but also as the Son of God.

We will not, however, forestall the conclusions which

we hope to arrive at, but will proceed at once with our inquiry.

In striving to apprehend the meaning and significance of the death of Jesus, it will be necessary first of all to review the circumstances under which it took place.

Jesus probably arrived at Bethany on the Friday previous to the Passover, and remained there, to rest, during the following day—which was the Sabbath—staying at the house of His friends, Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. The next day He went on to Jerusalem, making His triumphal entry, and "looking round on all things"—a day's doings the meaning and import of which we have discussed in the previous chapter. He did not take lodgings in Jerusalem, but returned in the evening to Bethany: it was a convenient place at which to lodge during the feast, being only half-an-hour's walk from the city; and, besides, it was doubtless some small consolation to Him, in the midst of His terrible loneliness, and in face of His impending doom, to have at His disposal the shelter of a home, and the affection of faithful friends.

On the following day He went again to Jerusalem, and (according to Mark's Gospel) undertook the significant task of clearing the temple courts of the traffickers who infested it. He also seems to have spent some part of the day in teaching the people.

On the Tuesday morning He once more appeared in the city, and began again to teach in the temple. But now the authorities interfered. Alarmed at the popularity of which His triumphal entry was so striking an evidence, and indignant at His assumption of

authority in clearing the temple, the leaders of the three great factions into which Jewish opinion was at that time divided combined to make common cause against Him.

Carefully selecting their champions and their topics beforehand, they went to Him in the temple, demanding to know who had given Him the authority to act in the way He did, and plying Him with questions, in attempting to answer which they hoped that He might be betrayed into some statement which they could use as a handle against Him.

A most striking scene, this, of the Galilean carpenter standing alone in the temple, in the midst of malignant enemies and a fickle populace, undergoing cross-examination on the most difficult subjects which the keenest intellects of the nation could select! A critical hour! since to falter, or to make a mistake, involved His own disgrace, and the triumph of His foes.

But He never faltered, He made no mistake. He answered every question which they propounded with profoundest wisdom. With the most consummate skill He avoided every trap laid for Him; yet at the same time He was perfectly straightforward, sincere, and truthful in all the replies which He gave; perfectly just also, and willing to accord a generous recognition to any wise or truthful word which those who were opposing Him might speak. (Cf. Mark xii. 28-34.)

At last He emerged from the contest completely victorious; and His enemies, convicted of disingenuousness, of duplicity, and of ignorance, slunk away, not daring to question Him further.

Then, and not till then, did He give vent to the

burning indignation which their conduct, not only on this occasion, but on many previous ones, had caused Him to feel. In the most scathing philippic which has ever been uttered by mortal lips He denounced their hypocrisy, and their wickedness, poured out on them the vials of His scorn and wrath, and pronounced on them the doom of woe.

It made the breach between Him and them complete. Such a man they felt to be intolerable! and that very day the Sanhedrin unanimously resolved to compass His death.

This task, however, they found to be a very difficult one to accomplish—at least with the speed which their malignant hate desired—both because it was necessary to have some semblance of an accusation against Him, and also because of His popularity with the multitudes who, at that time, filled the city.

But just as they had reluctantly arrived at the conclusion that they must wait until the feast was over, and the bulk of the people had departed to their homes, an opportunity was afforded them for almost immediately gratifying their revenge. Judas Iscariot, one of His own disciples, appeared before them, and offered to betray Him into their hands. "And they, when they heard it, were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently deliver Him unto them."

Meanwhile Jesus returned again to Bethany; at which place He apparently remained during the Wednesday, not visiting the city again until the evening of the following day (Thursday), when, after previously sending two of His disciples to make the

necessary preparations, He once more entered it, to eat the passover.

We need not dwell on the familiar details of that last meal with His disciples which, happily, have been so fully preserved for us. Never had He displayed greater sublimity of spirit; never had He unbosomed Himself to them so completely, or fed them with richer spiritual food. It was not, however, until the traitor had been dismissed, that He was able to give Himself up to unrestrained communion with His chosen followers. As long as Judas remained, the shadow of his impending treachery clouded the soul of his Master. But when, at a hint from Jesus, he went away to do his deed of shame, the Spirit of the Master soared to the loftiest heights of faith and hope and love, and the path of shame and agony which He was in a few hours to tread was completely forgotten in the clear anticipation of the glorious results which would follow from the completion of His work. At midnight they left the house, and made their way through the silent streets to the eastern gate, from which ran the familiar road which led to Bethany. They did not, however, go as far as the village. There was to be no rest or sleep for Him that night—no rest or sleep any more for Him, in this life, until His lifeless body hung on the Cross.

They went instead to a garden at the foot of Olivet called Gethsemane—evidently a frequent haunt of His, since Judas made sure of finding Him there. There ensued a terrible reaction from the exalted mood which He had lately experienced. Temptation assailed Him; doubt and fear racked His Mind; in

an agony, the intensity of which is entirely beyond our comprehension—since we can form no adequate conception of His knowledge and feelings with regard to the elements which were mingled in His cup of woe—He prayed three times that the cup might pass.

It was a request which His Father could not grant; but He gave instead the strength which He required to meet His "hour." He rose from His knees perfectly resigned to His Father's will, and with His soul in the possession of a peace which remained unruffled till He closed His eyes in death.

Meanwhile Judas had obtained a band of soldiers with their officers from the authorities. Followed by these, and a "multitude"—probably partly consisting of servants and dependants of the chief priests and scribes, and partly of people attracted by curiosity—he led the way, amid the clashing of arms and the flashing of lights, to the place where he knew he would find his Master.

He was thus prepared for either opposition, or an attempt at flight; but such preparation was altogether unnecessary. Jesus came at once to meet him, submitted to his traitorous kiss, and promptly restrained a feeble attempt at resistance on the part of His disciples. Solicitous for their welfare to the last, He requested that His followers might be allowed to depart—a request the answer to which they hardly seem to have waited to hear, for no sooner did they see Him in the hands of His enemies than they all fled away into the darkness. Then He submitted to be bound, and was led, a helpless prisoner, back to the city.

He was now completely in the power of His enemies; but even now they did not find it easy to accomplish the deed upon which they had resolved. It was necessary to give some semblance of legality to the sentence they had already determined to pronounce, but how to do it baffled their ingenuity.

His captors took Him first to the residence of Annas. He had formerly been high priest, and still retained the title, though his son-in-law, Caiaphas, was the actual holder of the office. He occupied a position of great social influence, and was really, though not nominally, the head of the Sanhedrin. He had not the power to try Jesus, but he wished to see and question Him concerning His teaching and His followers. Jesus, however, refused to answer him, stating that all that He had done He had done openly before the eyes of the world, and that there were plenty of witnesses who could testify concerning His works and deeds. This embarrassing answer so angered one of the officials, that he struck Jesus a brutal blow on the mouth; an act which Annas apparently allowed to pass without reproof, but which called forth from the sufferer the stern rebuke: "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil, but if well, why smitest thou me?" (John xviii. 19-24.)

Finding that he could get nothing out of Jesus, Annas sent Him on to Caiaphas. It was still night, and a legal meeting of the Sanhedrin could not be held before sunrise. Nevertheless, its members had already assembled in the palace of Caiaphas, in anticipation of Jesus' arrest; and though they seem to have held a second formal meeting in the morning, to confirm the

proceedings of the informal trial which now took place, it was in the darkness, and before this illegal assembly, that Jesus was actually tried.*

They had not found it difficult to procure a number of witnesses against Him, who were willing enough to accommodate their evidence to the obvious desires of His judges. "Many bore false witness against Him" (Mark xiv. 56). But, perhaps owing to the fact that they had not had time to "work up" the case properly, they met with an unexpected difficulty in obtaining any agreement of testimony. At least two witnesses were required to establish any charge, and no two could be found in this case whose witness agreed together.

After many had been examined, two men did at length succeed in agreeing that He had made a statement, or threat, to the effect that He would, or could, destroy the temple. But even their testimony was not in agreement, and such a statement as that, even if amply substantiated, would not justify a sentence of death.†

* Compare Matt. xxvi. 57-68 with Matt. xxvii. 1, and Mark xiv. 53-65 with Mark xv. 1. Luke in his account of Peter's denial of his Lord (Luke xxii. 54-65), which occurred before cock-crow, plainly implies this first trial, though he records the solemn adjuration which the high priest addressed to Jesus to tell them if He was the Christ, the Son of God, and our Lord's reply, as taking place at the morning assembly. (Luke xxii. 66-71). John does not give any account of the proceedings before the Sanhedrin.

† Mark says of these two witnesses: "not even so did their witness agree together." Perhaps in the accounts of their testimony which are recorded by Mark and Matthew, and which are by no means in perfect agreement, we have the evidence which the one and the other gave. (Cf. Matt. xxvii. 61, Mark xiv. 57-58).

Jesus meanwhile stood silent, not condescending to make any reply to the charges brought against Him; indeed, it was unnecessary—the contradictory nature of the evidence made any reply superfluous. His calm, contemptuous silence, and the fear that the case was going to completely break down, at last threw the president, Caiaphas, into a transport of rage. He rose from his seat, and indignantly demanded to know why Jesus refused to speak; and when He still remained silent, he solemnly adjured Him by the living God to say whether He was the Christ, the son of God.

He might still have remained silent, and thus have prevented His judges from making use of any words of His, uttered in their presence, as a handle against Him. But had He adopted this course, they might have interpreted His silence as a denial of His claim. There are some questions to which, however unfair it may be to ask them, no thoroughly truthful man can refuse to give an answer, when solemnly adjured to speak. He knew that He *was* their Messiah, and the well-beloved Son of the Father. And so, though He was well aware that they would not believe Him, and would deem His answer blasphemous, He immediately answered the high priest's question in the affirmative—adding that the vision and prophecy which is recorded in the seventh chapter of the book of Daniel would henceforward begin to be fulfilled: "Jesus saith unto him, 'Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Henceforth ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of

heaven.'"* This clear statement of the truth concerning Himself His judges at once seized upon as a sufficient ground for pronouncing sentence upon Him. Caiaphas, rending his clothes, declared it to be blasphemy—which undoubtedly it would have been if it had not been the simple truth—and putting the question immediately to the assembly, the verdict "worthy of death" was unanimously pronounced.

This midnight trial, as we have previously intimated, was an informal one; and even if the verdict had been just, it would have been unjust and illegal to regard the prisoner, after such an examination, as a condemned criminal. But justice and law had been totally disregarded already, and we are hardly surprised to find that a further act of shameful injustice was now perpetrated. We will not dwell on the disgraceful scene—the vile abuse—the insults—the blows to which this innocent, holy, divine Man was subjected,—in which apparently even the members of the Sanhedrin, wholly losing sight of their dignity, in the intensity of their hatred, took part; it is too sickening.

As early in the morning as possible, the formal meeting of the Sanhedrin was held to confirm the proceedings of the previous night; and then they went immediately in a body, with their prisoner, to the Roman Procurator, Pontius Pilate, to demand that the death sentence which they had decreed should be confirmed by him.

Pilate was residing at the time in the splendid palace

* Matt. xxvi. 64. (Compare Mark xiv. 62, and see Daniel vii. 13-14).

which Herod the Great had built. He usually resided at Cæsarea, but it was the custom of the procurator to go up to Jerusalem at the times of the great feasts to preserve order. Thus the Jewish authorities were able to make their appeal to him without delay.

As they would have been made ceremonially unclean—and consequently would have been unable to eat the Passover—if they had entered the residence of a Gentile, they halted at the paved court in front of the palace, and sent a message to Pilate.

They evidently expected that he would not put himself to the trouble of making any inquiry into the case, but would grant their request without delay, and were surprised when he came out to them and asked, "What accusation bring ye against this man?" "If this man were not an evil-doer," they indignantly replied, "we should not have delivered him up unto thee."

But, either because he had heard something about Jesus, or because he was not in a good humour, or perhaps because he was not altogether insensible to the claims of justice, this answer did not satisfy Pilate.* If the man was no more than an evil-doer (or "disturber of the public peace") if this was the only charge they had to bring against him, they need not trouble him in the matter; they might take and judge him according to their law, he intimated.

But the Romans had taken from them the power of inflicting capital punishment, and it was death which they were determined to see inflicted in this case.

* "He knew that for envy they had delivered Him up." (Matt. xxvii. 18.)

In their own court they had condemned Him for blasphemy; but they knew that such a charge would not be sufficient in the eyes of the Gentile governor, and so they hastily formulated others. "They accused him of many things," amongst others of claiming to be king, of perverting the people, and of forbidding the payment of tribute to Rome,—endeavouring thus to make Him appear a man who endangered the peace of the country, and taught revolutionary doctrines.

Such charges the Roman procurator, well knowing the inflammable materials of which the nation he governed was composed, could not overlook; and as Jesus stood silent all the while, he at length turned to Him and asked Him what He had to say in reply to all these accusations. But Jesus still kept silent. "He gave him no answer, not even to one word, insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly." (Matt. xxvii. 14). And now a conflict of feelings began in Pilate's mind, which we can plainly trace in all the subsequent proceedings. On the one hand he was convinced that the prisoner was innocent, and was impressed by His silence, and the dignity of His bearing in the presence of His accusers; on the other hand he was afraid of offending the Jews, and of giving them any grounds for accusing him to the emperor. He had a genuine wish to do what was just and right in the matter, but unfortunately expediency and self-interest prompted a different course, and, as we might expect in the case of a worldly-minded, selfish, corrupt man such as he was, the claims of self-interest and expediency finally won the day.

Not without a prolonged fight, however; and the

fact that the struggle was so prolonged—that he strove so hard to accomplish the impossible feat of persuading the prisoner's enemies to release Him, or to be content with some punishment less than death—bears striking witness to the depth of the impression which Jesus, by His mien and bearing, and the few words which He spoke, produced upon Pilate. Why should he have been so reluctant to hand over this Galilean peasant to His enemies? He was, in all probability, not by any means the only man he had unjustly delivered over to death. But there was something in this man which impressed even Pilate—stirred in him all the better feelings of his nature, made him almost afraid to be unjust. His sin, when he did yield, was, as Jesus Himself told him, the sin of mis-using the power entrusted to him in his own interests—a sufficiently heinous one, but not so great as that of Caiaphas and the Jews, in whom the divine perfection of Jesus stirred no feelings except those of diabolical hatred—who beheld the light and called it darkness.

Thinking that perhaps the prisoner would be more willing to speak if he examined Him privately, he had Him taken into the palace, and asked Him whether He really claimed the title of king. It was a question which Jesus could not answer until He knew more definitely what Pilate meant by it, and so He replied by a counter-question: "Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee concerning me?"—"Do you really want to know if I claim royal dignity, and in what sense, or are you simply adopting at random the vague accusation which my enemies outside have been making against me?"

"Am I a Jew?" Pilate scornfully replied. "Do you think I care anything about Jewish matters or opinions? But I want to know what you have done, and how it is that your own nation, and the chief priests, have brought you to me—you who claim to be their king—and are clamouring for your death."

Jesus' reply (if Pilate could only have understood it) was a complete answer to both his questions. It stated the sense in which He did lay claim to the title of king, and in doing so it disclosed the reason of the opposition of His countrymen. "My kingdom is not of this world; if it had been, my followers would have fought for me, and I should not have been here."

"So then you are a king after all," Pilate scornfully exclaimed. The correct interpretation of Jesus' reply is somewhat uncertain. It may be either a definite acceptance of the title, or a leaving of the matter for Pilate to decide as he chose. Probably the latter interpretation is the correct one. Jesus cared nothing for the mere title; but He was desirous that Pilate should be under no misapprehension as to the character of His sovereignty, and the claim which He made on men's allegiance; and so He added that His mission was to bear witness to the truth, and that all truth-loving men were bound to be His followers. This answer elicited from Pilate his famous reply: "What is truth?"—an exclamation rather than a question, to which he apparently did not expect an answer (and would not have got one if he had expected it), for he immediately went out and told the

Jews that he had failed to find the prisoner guilty of any crime.

This decision was received with shouts of rage. They began to reiterate the charges they had made against Him, saying that He had stirred up the people from one end of the country to the other, "from Galilee even unto this place." (Luke xxiii. 5.)

The mention of Galilee suggested to Pilate a way of getting rid of this troublesome business, and of shifting the responsibility of coming to a decision on to the shoulders of some one else.

Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, was at that time in Jerusalem, and it would be quite in accordance with the requirements of Roman law if the case were settled by Herod instead of himself. It would, at the same time, be a graceful act, affording him an opportunity of healing the breach which at the time existed between Herod and himself. Accordingly, having ascertained that Jesus was a Galilean, and consequently rightly came under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him over to him, in charge of a guard, and accompanied by His accusers.

This despicable prince—the husband of Herodias, the murderer of the Baptist—was glad when he saw who the prisoner was, for he had heard about Him, and had long wished to see Him. He was prompted in this desire by nothing higher than curiosity, and the hope of seeing Jesus work a miracle. Capricious, sensual, and superstitious, he was even more incapable than Pilate of recognising and being impressed by the majesty, and grace, and purity of the Man before him.

He plied Jesus with questions—foolish or imper-

tinent ones, doubtless—to which our Lord vouchsafed no reply whatever; any more than He did to the accusations which the chief priests and scribes poured out against Him, hoping to induce the frivolous king to pronounce the sentence they desired.

In this, however, they were disappointed. For some reason or other Herod refused to try the case. Finding that he could get nothing out of the prisoner, he and his bodyguard revenged themselves by making sport of Him. They decked Him in a white robe, to indicate that He was a candidate for the Jewish throne, and after making Him the butt of their gibes and mockery, sent Him, thus arrayed, back through the crowded streets to Pilate.

When the procurator found that he would be obliged after all to decide the case, he was as unwilling as ever to yield to the demand of the Jews, yet was afraid to brave their rage; and, like many another unprincipled and time-serving man, he thought he might be able to get out of the difficulty by means of a compromise. He therefore summoned the chief priests and rulers to his presence, and told them that as neither he nor Herod had been able to discover that there was any ground for the accusations which they had made against the prisoner, he had determined to have Him scourged and then to release Him. To inflict any punishment at all on a man who, he was convinced, was perfectly innocent, was a scandalous injustice; and he showed how little he understood the nature of the case, and the temper of the nation over which he ruled, in thinking that, by thus partially yielding to their evident hatred of the prisoner, he would be able

to satisfy them. It was a surrender of principle which proved wholly futile—a sin and a blunder which led him from one false position to another, till he finally threw all principle to the winds, and gave his sanction to the greatest crime that the world has ever witnessed—little knowing what he was doing, and wholly unconscious that he was saddling himself with the scorn and contempt of all future ages.

Just at this juncture, however, a circumstance happened which interrupted the proceedings. Up to this point the authorities had been the accusers of Jesus. They had gone to Pilate early, hoping to get his sanction at once, so that the execution might be accomplished before the populace knew anything about what was going on. But the procurator's unexpected obstinacy, and the time occupied in sending Jesus to Herod, had frustrated their design. Jerusalem was now astir, and the time had come for the people to go and claim a highly-prized privilege from the governor. And now the crowd appeared, streaming towards the palace, and shouting their demand for the release of a prisoner. (Mark xv. 8.)

The appearance of the multitude at this point is one of those striking coincidences, in which we seem to come across clear traces of an overruling providence in the affairs of men. This deed of wickedness is not to be done in a corner; the nation is not to be allowed to shuffle out of its responsibility by laying the blame on its rulers. The people are to be given a voice in the judgment; they are to be allowed to choose between their Messiah and a robber.

They came, apparently not knowing that Jesus had

been arrested, and was now undergoing trial. They came shouting for the release of Barabbas, a man of whom nothing is known except what the Evangelists tell us—that he was a robber (John xviii. 40), who had committed murder in an insurrection (Mark xv. 7) in the city (Luke xxiii. 19).

Pilate—once more fatally misunderstanding the temper and disposition of the nation he governed—welcomed their appearance, thinking it would afford him a way of escape from the difficulty. Surely, if he offered them this prisoner, who had won such popularity, and made such a stir throughout the land, they would eagerly accept the offer! Surely they would prefer the Man who claimed to be their king, to one who was merely an unsuccessful leader in a rebellion! And so, confident of the result, he gave them the choice. If the reading of many later MSS. is correct, Barabbas' name was also Jesus; and his question to them was, "Whom will ye that I release to you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus Christ?"

Taken by surprise, at first they seem to have hesitated. A crowd has little or no mind of its own: it can shout a catchword; it can and will readily accept the decision of its leaders; but it will hesitate to decide, unless a clue is given it. Each man is afraid of expressing his opinion till he is sure that it is in agreement with his neighbour's. But leaders were there, and the clue was soon given. The members of the Sanhedrin dispersed themselves among the crowd, and began urging the people to demand the release of Barabbas, and the crucifixion of Jesus. And with fatal facility the people yielded to their insistence.

They probably did not need much persuasion; for we have already seen how thoroughly Jesus had alienated their sympathies, on the day of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, by refusing to conform His actions to their hopes and expectations concerning the Messiah. And they were not likely to have the feelings of disgust and contempt which His conduct, on that occasion, had aroused in them, softened or changed by beholding Him in the plight in which they now found Him—bound, forlorn, and helpless in the hands of His enemies. That man claim to be their king! It was too ridiculous; Barabbas was more of a man than He!

Poor deluded mob! blind, and led by the blind! We can feel sure that it was not the stern, but the tender feelings of Jesus' nature, which were roused by the shouts they raised: "Not this man, but Barabbas"; not wrath, but sorrow, and a choking flood of pity, even when, in reply to Pilate's further question: "What, then, shall I do unto Jesus who is called Christ?" they shouted "Crucify Him, crucify Him!"

Even then Pilate did not at once yield. There is a slight discrepancy at this point between the accounts given us by the Synoptists, and the narrative of the Fourth Gospel. They all agree that Pilate made more than one effort still to save the prisoner; but according to the Synoptists, his reiterated appeal to the multitude was made before he gave the order that the prisoner should be scourged—the usual preliminary to crucifixion, which would naturally not be inflicted until sentence had been passed—and no mention is made

by them of his making any attempt subsequent to the infliction of that punishment to save the prisoner's life.

According to the Fourth Gospel, however, the scourging occurred before Pilate, taking his place on the judgment seat, reluctantly pronounced the sentence they desired, and it was between these two events that he made his thrice repeated attempt to turn the multitude from their purpose.

The Fourth Gospel probably gives the more accurate account of the course of events,* and from it we gather that, in spite of the result of his appeal to the mob, Pilate still held to his original intention of scourging Jesus and then releasing Him. He seems to have thought that the sight of the bleeding victim would arouse their compassion, and that when he then again asked them to decide what should be done with Him, they would clamour for His release—a request which he evidently, at that stage of the proceedings, would have been willing enough to grant, even if he had had to release Barabbas as well.

Accordingly he now gave the order that Jesus should be scourged. We need not dwell on the details of that pitiable and revolting spectacle; the pure and holy Son of Man in the hands of the brutal soldiery, enduring this excruciating and degrading punishment!

The physical pain which He experienced must have been most intense; but still more intense must have

* The writer apparently had at his disposal sources of information not available to the Synoptists, inasmuch as he records what took place at both of the private or semi-private interviews which Pilate had with Jesus. Cf. John xviii. 33; xix. 9.

been the mental and spiritual agony which He endured. Not only was it an outrage on justice, it was an insult to humanity. And not only must those feelings of respect and reverence which the perfect Son of Man undoubtedly had for the "human form divine" have been insulted and lacerated, but those deeper feelings also, of faith in, and reverence for, the God-like in man, how they must have been wounded in this personal encounter with the brutal and the vile!

For the soldiers were evidently cruel and degraded enough to take pleasure in His sufferings. Nor did even that content them. For when the savage punishment was over, they placed their exhausted Victim on a seat, and, decking Him in an old cloak, and thrusting a rod into His hand, and pressing upon His brows a hastily plaited garland of thorns, they passed before Him in turns, bending to Him in mock homage, at the same time spitting on Him, and striking Him, either with their hands, or with the reed which they snatched from His grasp. When at length they tired of their sport, they led Him out to the pavement in front of the palace again, with the cloak and the crown of thorns still on Him, to exhibit Him to the waiting crowd.

Pilate had just preceded them. He was as anxious as ever to save Jesus, and he came to announce once more that he could find no crime in this man. "Behold the Man!" he exclaimed, as the marred and humiliated form of Jesus appeared among the group of soldiers issuing from the Praetorium. He hoped to rouse the pity of His enemies; he only succeeded in intensifying their hatred. It maddened them to think that such a forlorn creature should claim to be their

king; and the chief priests and their subordinates—probably fathoming Pilate's design, and anticipating any effect which the pitiable spectacle might have upon the multitude—at once gave the cue by raising again the cry, "Crucify Him, crucify Him."

Pilate met the cry with an angry sneer: "Crucify Him yourselves. If you want to judge the man, you can: for my part, I find nothing with which He can be charged!"

Their reply was to the effect that they had already judged Him, and found Him by their law—a law to which he, as governor, ought to give effect—worthy of death, "because He made Himself the Son of God."

Though the sceptical Roman could form no adequate conception of the real nature of this claim, he was troubled and afraid when he heard of it. It deepened the impression of awe with which this remarkable prisoner had inspired him, and he was superstitious enough to believe in the possibility of its being true. Mythology was full of stories of sons of the gods who had appeared from time to time on the earth; might not this mysterious being be one of these; might he not really be an emissary from the national divinity of this strange people over whom he ruled? The thought so troubled him that he once more took Jesus aside with him into the palace, and with mingled awe and curiosity asked Him, "Whence art Thou?" "But Jesus gave him no answer." It was a question, the full and clear answer to which would have been entirely beyond Pilate's apprehension. Moreover, it was irrelevant; there was no

necessity for Pilate to ask it, in order to arrive at a just decision of the case before him. Still, there is a deep significance in Jesus' silence; for He might, with perfect truthfulness, have given such an answer as would have confirmed all Pilate's superstitious fears, and determined him at all hazards to acquit Him. This was one of the many points in the protracted trial at which He might—without, so far as we can judge, any sacrifice of principle—have "saved His life"; and He did not take advantage of it.

Pilate did not know what to make of the silence of Jesus. It both surprised, and troubled, and irritated him. He hardly knew whether to regard it as an indication that this man was really what He claimed to be; or as an indication that He was merely an ignorant and deluded enthusiast, who did not understand the gravity of the situation in which He stood, or the importance of giving respectful answers to his questions.

But a glance at the forlorn and almost ludicrous spectacle which the prisoner before him presented—for most likely Jesus still had on the cloak in which the soldiers had arrayed Him, and the crown of thorns; and the marks of their violent abuse must have been plain upon His face, and the blood which the lash had drawn, on His garments—a glance seems to have convinced him that the latter was the only possible view to take; and he sternly demanded: "Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to release thee, and have power to crucify thee?"

To this question Jesus did reply. With quiet dig-

nity He corrected His judge, and with sad solemnity He condemned those who had already condemned Him. Pilate had spoken as if his authority was absolute; in a certain sense it was, but in the highest sense it was not; it was a trust committed to him, and also committed to the authorities who had already judged and sentenced Him, by a superior power; a trust the abuse of which was a crime and a sin.

Pilate in all probability was incapable of grasping the full significance of Jesus' reply.

The only superior power he recognised was that of the Roman Emperor. But Caiaphas, the head of the Jewish theocracy, professed to hold his power from God. This important difference Jesus recognised in His judgment of the two. The greater guilt, because the larger light, belonged to Caiaphas. "Thou wouldest," He said, "have no power against me, except it were given thee from above; therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath greater sin."

This striking reply seems to have altered the opinion which the silence of the prisoner has caused His judge to hastily form. The man who gave such an answer could not be merely an ignorant enthusiast. It deepened the impression which Jesus had previously produced on him, and strengthened the superstitious fears which this impression, combined with the charge which the Jews had just made, had aroused in him. It confirmed his desire to release Him; and he went out to the Pavement, and communicated his decision to the expectant multitude.

But, alas for his boasted power! He was as weak as water in face of the angry threat which the leaders

hurled against him, as soon as they heard what his decision was.

"If thou release this man thou art not Cæsar's friend; every one that maketh himself a king opposeth Cæsar." Pilate well knew that they would make this accusation against him to the Emperor, if he persisted in his intention; and he knew too that this charge, backed as it was sure to be by other charges, for which his administration had furnished only too much ground, was pretty sure to make him lose his post.

And to a man like Pilate what were the claims of justice and pity, in comparison with the claims of self-interest? He was genuinely desirous of being just and merciful in the present instance, but not in the least willing to pay the price which such a course of action would involve. Justice and mercy were luxuries with which he could dispense; place and power were necessaries. And so, after one more feeble attempt to have his own way, he yielded.

He had Jesus brought out to him, and sat down on the judgment seat. "Behold your king," he said to them bitterly. He felt that he must yield, but he would not yield with a good grace. He was very angry, and filled at the same time with a superstitious fear—a fear which must have been intensified by the striking message which Matthew informs us (xxvii. 19) his wife sent him in the course of the trial: "Have thou nothing to do with that just man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him." Besides he seems to have been haunted by the feeling that this man, for whose death they are clamouring, and whom he was about to unjustly sentence, might really be what He claimed to be.

Again they raised the cry, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!"

"Shall I crucify your king?" he retorted, persisting in giving his prisoner the title—chiefly in his anger against the Jews, because he saw that they were enraged at the suggestion, and indignantly rejected the claim, but also partly because of the feeling which haunted him. "We have no king but Cæsar," the chief priests replied, thereby formally renouncing the theocratic idea, and abandoning the Messianic hope to which the nation had so long clung.*

We gather from Matthew's Gospel that Pilate, before he gave the final order, had recourse to a striking symbolical act, in order to impress upon the people the fact that the responsibility of Jesus' death rested entirely upon them, and in order to soothe his own troubled conscience. He may even have thought that he could really transfer the whole guilt of the deed to them in this way.

He ordered water to be brought, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of this blood; see ye to it." And all the people answered and said, "His blood be upon us, and on our children." Then, apparently without formally pronouncing sentence upon Him, he delivered Jesus up to be crucified.

It was now nearly noon, and no time was lost in carrying out the sentence. Jesus and two others, robbers, who had been sentenced to the same cruel

* "The kingdom of God, in the confession of its rulers, had become the kingdom of the world. In the place of the Christ they have found the Emperor. They first rejected Jesus as the Christ, and then, driven by the irony of circumstances, they rejected the Christ altogether." Westcott: Gospel of St. John, *in loc.*

death, were taken in charge by a small Roman guard; they were given their crosses to carry, and the melancholy procession at once started for the place of execution. The chief priests and the multitude accompanied them, and the crowd was doubtless largely augmented in the passage through the busy streets.

Two incidents of the journey are recorded by the Evangelists. The first is, that the soldiers, on the way, impressed a passer-by, and compelled him to carry the cross of Jesus. They would hardly have taken the trouble to do this if He had not been obviously too exhausted to carry it Himself. The probability is that He stumbled, or fainted, under the burden, and could not proceed till He had been relieved of it. The second incident recorded is, that among the multitude which followed were some women who were friendly and sympathetic, and who gave utterance to their grief in sobs and laments. To these He turned and spoke, and His words give us a precious glimpse of His thoughts and feelings in this hour of His agony. They display a spirit absolutely unselfish, and completely free from bitterness or indignation at the cruel wrong which was being done to Him—a mind, too, which was perfectly clear-sighted in its estimate of the deed which was being done, and of the consequences which would ensue from it. "Weep not for me," He said, "weep for yourselves and for your children; for such woe is coming as shall make you hail childlessness as a blessing, and welcome death as a deliverer. For if they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

Golgotha, the usual place of execution, was not far from the city, and was soon reached. Here the soldiers erected the crosses—after nailing the victims to them —placing Jesus in the middle. Before the actual crucifixion took place He was offered the usual medicated draught which philanthropy provided on such occasions; but He refused it, wishing to keep His senses clear. After the execution the soldiers, according to custom, divided the garments of the three amongst them, casting lots for Jesus' tunic, which was made in a single piece, and which they decided it was a pity to tear.

They remained after this to keep guard—a precaution which it was necessary to adopt in the case of such a lingering death as crucifixion, in order to prevent friends and sympathisers from taking down the sufferers. By Pilate's orders a superscription, written in three languages, was affixed to the cross, announcing, "This is the king of the Jews."

Five hours of mortal agony followed. We need not dwell on the physical suffering which Jesus must have endured; we have no means of telling whether it was more intense than that endured by the other sufferers, it certainly was not so prolonged.* On His spiritual suffering we dare not dwell. What His pure, noble, loving Spirit suffered in those hours of

* It seems very probable that Jesus' sufferings were more intense than the sufferings of the majority of those who have died a similar death. We infer it from the fact that He must have had an exquisite physical organism, that He refused the opiate, and that He died in such a surprisingly short time.

final contact and conflict with the sin and evil of the world, no human mind can comprehend. He hung there, the victim of the hatred and malice of those who should have loved and esteemed Him; exposed to the taunts and jeers of the people He longed to save. Evil exhausted its venom on Him in that last hour; it manifested itself in its extremest form; it did its very worst against the one Man who was the incarnation of goodness. He overcame it; taunts failed to move Him from His steadfast determination not to use His power to save Himself; insults and scorn failed to arouse in His pure soul any vindictive or unworthy feelings—failed to extract from Him any answering word of scorn; hatred failed to quench His love. He overcame; but at what a cost of mental and spiritual anguish we shall never know.

Seven utterances of His, as He hung there, have been recorded by the Evangelists. They afford us precious glimpses into His Mind. They enable us to see that in those awful hours, while slowly dying, He displayed just those same qualities which we have noted in Him on previous occasions. He prayed for the soldiers as they were nailing Him to the cross. He responded willingly to the petition which one of His fellow-sufferers addressed to Him. He gave directions to a disciple to provide His mother with a home. Then for a long time He relapsed into silence; what His thoughts were we may perhaps partially surmise from the cry which at length escaped Him, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Later still He asked for a drink to allay the pangs of thirst. Finally His

spirit seems to have recovered its perfect serenity: "It is finished," He exclaimed as the end drew near. At the very last His faith and hope were strong and clear: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit," He cried, with a loud voice; and then He died.

We have deemed it necessary to review thus fully the familiar details of the arrest, and trials, and crucifixion of Jesus, in order that the reader may have them vividly in mind in reading the attempt we are about to make to apprehend the significance of this closing act of His life, and to interpret it as a revelation of His Mind and Spirit.

For reasons which we have already stated, we cannot hope that this attempt will even approximate to success, in the sense of enabling us to comprehend the length, and breadth, and height, and depth of this deed of the Cross. But we make it because the theme is one which cannot possibly be avoided in any exposition of the Character of Jesus which makes any claim to completeness. We make it also because we trust that such an attempt may prove useful to some who have not adequately realised the divine quality of the deed which brought the earthly life of this Son of Man to a close; and what a claim it makes—even when regarded simply from its "natural" side—on their admiration and wonder, their faith and their love.

We would begin by pointing out one feature in the tragedy, which indeed cannot fail to impress anyone who seriously contemplates it, but which requires to be brought clearly into view, since it is—from the

standpoint from which we are contemplating it—and indeed from any standpoint—the most extraordinary feature of the event. It is the one feature which, estimated at its true value, differentiates the death of Jesus from that of all other men who have been innocently and unjustly put to death—which demands explanation, and yet which (we think the reader will find as he proceeds) baffles all attempts at complete and satisfactory explanation—at any rate as long as we keep to the region of the "natural." We refer to the fact that the death of Jesus was, clearly and indubitably, a *purely voluntary act.*

The other features of the drama do not differ markedly from those of many another tragedy in human history; indeed, they may almost be called the stock features of every tragedy of a similar kind. We have bitter and malignant enemies; a fickle populace; a traitor; an unjust judge—features common to many a similar deed of injustice—without one or more of which, indeed, such deeds would not be possible.

But what is not so common; what is indeed absolutely unique and unexampled, when we realise it fully and truly, is the attitude and bearing of the Central Figure of the tragedy—how He comported Himself throughout these closing scenes of His life—what He did, and what He abstained from doing.

In contemplating Him as He appears before us on this supreme occasion, we are constrained to acknowledge that He is not one whit the creature of circumstance. On the contrary, never more clearly than among these trying circumstances does He

stand revealed as master of His fate—submitting to it, not coerced into it; willing to die, not compelled to it; voluntarily laying down His life, not surrendering it as a helpless victim.

This voluntary submission of His is indeed complete and evident throughout. He sets His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem, clearly anticipating the fate which awaits Him there; He permits Himself to be betrayed and arrested.* He abstains from making any defence before His judges; He submits without protest to insults and degrading punishment; He makes no remonstrance when His Roman judge hands Him over to His enemies; and He is led away and crucified with His mood of passive submission unchanged. All these things happen to Him not because He has made any miscalculation, or because circumstances are too strong for Him, but because He permits them to happen to Him; had He willed it He might have avoided them all.

It may be urged, and truly urged, that the mere fact that Jesus' death was a voluntary one, does not by any means constitute it a unique fact in history. It may be pointed out that there have been countless instances in which men have sacrificed themselves—even unto death—for friends, for country, for a cause, or for truth. This we may readily and frankly acknowledge. Nay, we may go further, and recognise

* He might easily, as we have pointed out in a previous chapter, have made His escape from Jerusalem and from Palestine at any time up to the very hour of His arrest. He knew of Judas' intention to betray Him, but abstained from any attempt either to turn him from his purpose, or to thwart him.

that, up to a certain point, a true parallel may be drawn between any such instance of genuine self-sacrifice, and the voluntary surrender of Jesus to death.

But only up to a certain point. Beyond that the parallelism fails. When the facts of Jesus' death are fully and truly recognised, it must be acknowledged that it cannot be completely paralleled by any or all the instances, though history is so gloriously full of them, in which men have died self-sacrificing deaths. It is quite true to say that He died for His friends, for His country, for a cause, for truth—quite true, but very far indeed from being the whole truth. To explain His death thus is to fall obviously short of a complete explanation. We realise at once that the motives of friendship and patriotism, and even the motives of devotion to a cause (even though that cause was the noble one of founding a Kingdom of Heaven upon earth), and of loyalty to truth, do not suffice to account for His voluntary death. We recognise, even in a case in which the parallelism seems most complete—*i.e.*, in the case of the death of Socrates—that it is imperfect at best, and inadequate to a degree which we may at least call indefinite, if not infinite.

As the point is of importance, and as it is not always recognised as clearly as it should be, it will be worth while to dwell briefly on those features of Jesus' self-sacrificing death which differentiate it from all others which can with any plausibility be placed in the same category, and constitute it a deed unexampled in the world's history.

These are to be found partly in the Character of the Man; partly in the Purpose to which He devoted His life; and partly, in the close—the organic—relation in which His death stands to both of these.

(I.) In any fair attempt to gauge the significance, and estimate the moral and spiritual worth of the death of Jesus, we must bear in mind the Character of the Man who elected to bring His earthly life to a close on a Cross.

What His Character was—how noble, how strong, how Godlike, how firmly and symmetrically compacted of all the highest and most spiritual qualities and excellencies which human nature can display; untainted by any alloy of selfishness, of weakness, or of sinfulness; towering to an immeasurable height of grandeur, and attaining to an incalculable degree of fulness,—this we trust the reader has already realised.

And He, who is indubitably the noblest, divinest Man who has ever walked this earth of ours, submits to having—or rather, as we have just said, elects to have—His life prematurely ended by a violent and unjust death. Surely this is a wholly unparalleled fact in the world's history, if only because the Character of the Man, who thus voluntarily surrendered His life, is wholly unparalleled. In proportion as we realise the singular and significant position into which the Character of Jesus elevates Him above the human race, we must also recognise the importance of the fact that He voluntarily ended His life on a Cross. The fact that such a Man should elect to finish His

career in such a way is so surprising, that it cannot fail to arrest the attention of the world; it is so strange and wonderful that it compels us to ask: Why did He elect thus to die? What were the reasons which decided Him; the motives which prompted Him—to do this amazing deed? And these are questions to which, the more we ponder His Character, the more difficult we shall find it to give any "natural" answer which can be considered adequate and satisfactory.

(II.) And the difficulty is increased when, to the unique Character of the man we link the unique Purpose to which He devoted His life.

In the light of that Purpose—which was no less than the founding of a world-wide Spiritual Kingdom in the hearts of men*—the inadequacy of the explanations to which we have alluded, to account for His voluntary death, is manifest.

He was evidently not merely a friend dying for His friends; nor yet a patriot dying for His country. Perhaps not quite so evidently, but still none the less indubitably, He was not simply a Leader dying for a cause. There is no direct and evident connection between His voluntary death and the success of the Cause He had at heart. At first it seemed likely to ensure, not its success, but its failure; and unless we can discover deeper motives, and a profounder necessity than this, we cannot assert confidently that by

* This definition which we give of His Purpose is sufficiently clear and comprehensive to bring out the point on which we are at present dwelling. The reader will find the matter more fully discussed in the Chapter on the Resurrection.

dying He promoted the success of the Cause better than He would have done had He continued to live.

Nor was He simply a martyr to truth. Doubtless His Purpose required that He should bear witness to the truth, and manifest an unswerving loyalty to it; but it did not, obviously, require that He should die for it; at any rate not at the time, and under the circumstances, in which His death actually took place. No! in the light of His Purpose these explanations of His death themselves need explaining, or rather they need to be supplemented by explanations as to why the Cause He had at heart, and the truth to which He bore such steadfast witness, required that He should voluntarily surrender His life for them. And any adequate attempt to do this (an attempt which we shall make later on) forces us to attach a significance to His death which incalculably transcends the limits of simple devotion to a cause, or of simple loyalty to truth.

(III.) This fact is placed beyond doubt by a consideration of the third unique feature of His self-sacrificing death, *i.e.*, the close—we have even ventured to say, the organic—relation in which that death stands both to His Character and to His Purpose.

For it is not sufficient to point out, as we have done just now, that the unexampled sublimity of His Character elevates His death into a position of unparalleled significance. We are forced to supplement this by acknowledging that it is in His death, and in that event alone, that His Character fully displays all its matchless sublimity.

If we hesitate to say that His voluntary surrender to

death was necessary in order to *make* Him the perfect Son, we can at least say that it was necessary in order that that perfection might be fully and adequately revealed. It consummated its manifestation; and we can unhesitatingly assert, not only that in no other event of His life was it so fully manifested, but also that in no other conceivable way could it have been better, or more fully manifested.

If He had not ended His life as He did, we should still have been compelled to acknowledge Him to be the divinest Man who ever walked our earth; but our conceptions of divine manhood must have for ever fallen short of those which we now can form from Him, to an extent which we cannot calculate. He dwelt amongst men, full of grace and truth; but *how* full, men would never have known, had He not recognised and obeyed the will of His Father, and submitted to the baptism of death.

But we are brought face to face with the most unique feature of Jesus' death, and can only then begin to adequately realise its sublimity—realising at the same time what deep soundings we must take if we are to fathom its meaning—when we recognise the close—the organic—relation in which it stands to the Purpose which He set Himself to accomplish.

That Purpose was, as we have pointed out, the splendidly original, and enormously difficult one of founding a Spiritual Kingdom in the world—a Kingdom founded on Truth, regulated by righteousness, swayed by love. He undertook no less a task than that of shifting the centre of gravity of the human

heart; of changing its bias towards sin into a bias towards holiness. He undertook to reconstitute human nature after the image of Him who created it; to restore to mankind its birthright, and to fulfil its destiny, by leading it into the liberty of the glory of sonship with God.

And nothing is more evident than the fact that He recognised, very early in His public career, if not from its very commencement, that in order to accomplish this gigantic task, it would be necessary for Him to die.

The reasons for that necessity we will consider shortly. At present we are simply noting the indubitable fact that it was a necessity, which He clearly recognised, and resolutely braced Himself to face. He regarded it as an integral part of the work which His Father had given Him to do. He contemplated it at different times with very different feelings. Sometimes, with perfect calmness, He spoke of it to His disciples as if it were almost a matter of course, and He was chiefly anxious that they should not be perplexed or dismayed when it happened. Again He spoke of it as a "baptism," and declared He was "straitened" till it was accomplished. On another occasion He seems to have had a clear prevision of the results which it would accomplish: "I, if I be lifted up," He said, "will draw all men unto me," though this, and the calm and unemotional way in which He spoke of it at the Last Supper, did not, as we know, prevent His soul from being troubled to its depths as He waited for His betrayer in Gethsemane.

But the varying emotions which swayed His Spirit

when He contemplated it, did not for a moment alter His conviction with regard to its necessity. Nor did they for a moment cause Him to waver in His steadfast resolve to submit to it. His feelings varied, but His will was immovably fixed. He recognised that His death was to form the final and indispensable link in the chain of that mighty Purpose which He had set Himself to accomplish; and recognising that, He calmly and resolutely accepted the fact, and bowed in submission to it. Convinced that His mission required that He should sacrifice Himself even unto death, He was never for a moment less than perfectly willing to die. Nothing in Jesus' life is so remarkable—so unexampled—as this feature to which we are now calling attention, *i.e.*, His clear recognition of the fact that His death was necessary for the accomplishment of the work which His Father had given Him to do; and nothing is so sublime as His willing submission to the necessity. Explain it how we will, the fact is indubitable, that He always regarded His death as standing in so essential a relation to His Purpose, that personal considerations not only did not influence Him, but did not apparently present themselves to His mind at all. He always looked upon His sufferings and His sad fate as detached from, and (in some sense) external to, Himself—necessary for the accomplishment of His mission, but not expressing in any way His Father's judgment on Himself. Consequently we find no trace or hint of any feeling in His mind that it was either a hardship, or an injustice that He should be tried, scourged, condemned, and crucified. Nor is He in the least perplexed or dismayed to find

that He, the Son in whom the Father is well pleased, must face the shame and agony of the Cross, and end His life so disastrously. It is not for Him the daughters of Jerusalem should weep, but for themselves and for their children; there is a divine necessity in His fate, which He recognises, and to which He willingly bows; and He is thus able to face the shame and disaster of His destiny calmly, and without dismay.

In the light of these unique features, and especially in the light of the one we have just considered, Jesus' voluntary death reveals itself as an act which immeasurably transcends, in sublimity and in importance, any other self-sacrificing death which the world has witnessed. It is sublime in proportion as the Character of the Man, and the Purpose which He set Himself to accomplish, are sublime; it is supremely important, because it bears such an essential relationship to the perfect manifestation of His Character, and to the complete accomplishment of His Purpose.

What the manifestation of Character which He displayed in dying actually was, we may now pause for a moment to consider a little more closely.

The moral and spiritual significance of the deed of the Cross becomes sufficiently evident in the light of Jesus' Purpose, and of the fact that He recognised its necessity, and willingly bowed to it. Though a consideration of the reasons which made it necessary that He should die may introduce us to sublimer aspects of His *Nature*, it will enable us to form no loftier conception of His *Character* than we

can form from the data already before us. For we can see now that this Man voluntarily died *for the world*. In the light of His Purpose that fact is indisputable. That Purpose was world-wide and age-long. The Cause He died for was the Cause of Humanity. The direct object He had in view was no less an one than the salvation of His race. The race was sin-bound, and His purpose was to set it free from the fetters of sin. The race, created in the image of God, was failing to realise its divine possibilities, and His purpose was to make men Godlike. But He realised (no matter now, how or why; the fact is sufficient for the present) that, in order to accomplish that Purpose, He must voluntarily sacrifice His life, *and He was willing to do it.*

So much we can say concerning the death of the Man Jesus without overstepping the limits of "that which is natural." No less than this we *must* say, if we are to do justice to the deed of the Cross contemplated simply within these limits.

And in the light of these facts His Character reveals itself in a dazzling splendour of glory, and in a fulness of perfection to which no language can do justice. The motives which prompted Him are seen to be the highest and purest which can animate the soul of man; the moral and spiritual qualities which He displayed are seen to be the grandest and noblest which the discipline of life can evoke.

Though we cannot hope by any elaborateness of exposition, to adequately unfold these to the reader, we will briefly draw attention to some of the most conspicuous.

And first we would point out the splendid Faith to which the deed of the Cross bears evidence.

His faith indeed was of so splendid a quality, and at times lifted Him to such heights of confidence, and linked itself so closely with a clearness of foresight and insight which is hardly distinguishable from foreknowledge—that we hesitate to make use of a word, the ordinary connotation of which is so much shallower, to describe this spiritual quality in Him. It seems inadequate, and almost inappropriate, to describe that attitude and poise of Spirit which, for instance, He displayed at the Last Supper, as based upon, and being the outcome of faith.

And doubtless if He had maintained that attitude and poise throughout, "faith," as we ordinarily understand it, would have been a word altogether inadequate to describe a spiritual quality so unique in its effects.

But as we know, the sublime confidence and repose of the supper chamber was followed by the despondency, the fear, and the agony of Gethsemane; and however far beyond our comprehension that scene in our Lord's life may be, in some of its aspects, it is certain that, in that awful hour, the wings of His faith drooped—drooped to such an extent that His Spirit lost its confidence, and His insight into the necessity for His death, as well as His foresight as to its results, were eclipsed by doubt and fear.

In that hour—in which He became uncertain about the necessity, and even the expediency, of treading the path His Father was calling Him to tread—(for He prayed that the cup might pass, if it were possible,

which He would not have done if He had not thought that it might be possible), His faith became so like what faith often, perhaps invariably, is, when severely put to the test—not confident, but fearful; not a song, but a cry; not the reposeful grasp, but the terrified death-grip on the hand of the Father—that we need not hesitate to speak of it as faith.

In that hour He did not *know*, He only trusted that His Father's will was good and right. He bowed in perfect submission to it, and He gained through His submission strength to meet His hour; but the lofty—the superhuman—mood of the supper-hour did not return; and it was in the strength of faith, and not in the strength of any such superhuman elevation of Spirit, that He faced and endured the dreadful closing hours of His life.

And, indeed, both the mood of the supper-hour and the mood of Gethsemane were abnormal. They show us how wide apart stood the extreme poles of feeling—the extreme limits of insight on the one hand, and of doubt and darkness on the other—between which His Spirit fluctuated; but they leave undecided the question: to what extent He habitually walked by faith, and to what extent faith with Him merged into sight.

Consequently we cannot infer from either of these incidents what was the normal light in which He regarded His death, and to what extent His faith was called into action, and tested, by it.

We have however discussed this point at some length in a previous chapter,* and it will be sufficient

* Chapter IX., "He set His face steadfastly."

to remind the reader that the conclusion arrived at was, that He did not always (perhaps not even often) contemplate His passion in a light which robbed it of its mystery, and its terrors. The Way of the Cross was, for the most part, strange and dark to Him; a path which no son of man had ever trodden before Him, and which He trod alone—and trod not mainly in the strength of a clear fore-knowledge of its issue, but in the strength of a splendid trust and confidence in His Father, which enabled Him to be obedient even unto death.

How splendid an act of faith that obedience of His unto death actually was, we can hardly hope to realise now by any effort of the imagination. For between us and this lonely Son of Man, treading the dark and awful road to Calvary, now stands that subsequent event—the Resurrection—by which the Father justified and glorified His trustful, obedient Son. And it is difficult, if not impossible, to shut off the light which streams from that event upon the life of Jesus, and to see Him clearly as He lived and died, before that transcendent miracle occurred.

We can see plainly enough, in the light of the Resurrection, that the way of the Cross was good and right; but we cannot fully realise how little good and right it must sometimes have seemed to Him while treading it, and while Resurrection was, at best, only an expectation and a hope. There is some doubt as to whether the Evangelists themselves (and especially the author of the Fourth Gospel) do not give us recollections of our Lord which that event had, in some respects at any rate, considerably modified; and

if the sources of our knowledge are thus affected, we may well despair of fully realising how dark and lonely the way of the Cross must have been to Him who actually trod it, and what degree of faith it consequently demanded.

It is always hard to die. But to die as He died—voluntarily surrendering Himself into the hands of His enemies, and submitting to an ignominious death, while as yet the pulse of life beat strong within Him; and the world was before Him; and He had accomplished nothing so far but the alienation of His countrymen, and the partial education of a handful of followers; and what He was to accomplish by His death was only surmised and hoped in moments of insight—not confidently known:—how difficult that must have been! How sublime His faith must have been, to enable Him to tread that path with confidence, and at the end to trustfully surrender His Spirit into His Father's hands—with the future still dark!

And, in conjunction with this sublime faith, the deed of the Cross reveals in this Man another spiritual quality, equally sublime—His perfect obedience to His Father's will.

This subordination of His own will to God's is indeed so invariable and consistent a feature of His Character, that we are in some danger of taking it for granted, and consequently of failing to realise its sublimity and moral worth. Yet the power of choice must have been His, no less than it is ours; and consequently the power of disobedience. How wonderful then that He never thought of disobeying, even when

His Father asked Him to drink the cup of shame and utter loss!

He became "obedient even unto death." No greater test of filial obedience was possible than that. But such a supreme test was absolutely necessary in order that the perfection of His filial obedience might be demonstrated. Until He had made the greatest and the last surrender which man can make—the surrender of life itself—at the call of duty, and at the instance of the spiritual light by which He directed His life, the fact could neither be absolutely clear, nor absolutely certain, that He possessed the filial spirit "without measure." It would always have been possible to say: "He might have failed if He had been subjected to that test; His life was sublime, and so far as we can see, perfect in the filial spirit which it displayed; but how would it have been if He had been called to die?"

We cannot say that now. He *was* called to die,—to die under circumstances which made death most painful, most shameful, most inglorious—to die a death which seemed to affix to His life-work the mark of utter failure—which exposed Him to the scorn and contempt of His countrymen, and bewildered and offended even His chosen followers. He was called to tread a path which seemed to lead to utter loss; a path altogether dark, except for the light which faith and hope shed upon it; a path which none but He could, at the time, see that He was called to tread, or even justified in treading. How He came to know with absolute certainty that it was His Father's will that He should tread that path is, as we have

previously pointed out, a mystery which we cannot hope to fathom; but it seems certain that He was never perplexed by any doubts on that point. His Father's will was plain to Him; but it was plain not because of, but in spite of, the circumstances by which He was surrounded. There was nothing in the circumstances to justify the course He adopted. His only justification was an inward conviction. The light by which He steered His course was purely spiritual—it was not the light of reason and common sense, but the light which flooded His trustful and loving Spirit from the eternal source of Light and Life.

Nor did His natural desires help Him at all in treading this path. He did not wish to die; He only willed it, because it was His Father's will. He was not tired of life, and anxious to escape from it. On the contrary, the pulses of life beat strong in Him, and He felt Himself straitened and hampered in the narrow path which He saw to be the path of duty.

In the light of these facts we can realise how supreme a test of His obedience was this call which He received—to die; and how perfect is the quality of the obedience which He manifested in His acceptance of the call. "Obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross"; what greater proof of obedience, we repeat, could the Father demand of any Son than that? Because this Son stood even that test—gave even that proof of filial submission—we are only claiming His due when we claim for Him the rank of Captain and Leader among the Sons of men; the rank of the First Born of the Sons of God.

But undoubtedly the master motive which prompted Jesus to accomplish the deed of the Cross was Love. It is the light of an amazing love—a love bearing, hoping, believing, enduring all things for mankind which was its object—it is this light—matchless in its purity, and dazzling in its splendour—which orbs itself against the dark background of hatred, and injustice, and cruelty; of sorrow, and shame, and agony, in which the Cross of Jesus is set. For though it is perfectly true that He surrendered Himself to death because He knew that it was His Father's Will that He should tread that path, it is not the whole truth. He did not simply obey the voice of duty; He was influenced by a higher motive than mere obedience. He deliberately chose the way of the Cross, because His unerring insight enabled Him to discern that in that way He could best accomplish His Purpose. That Purpose, we again repeat, was the stupendously grand, and perfectly unselfish one, of rescuing the human race from the dominion of sin, and winning them to love, and trust, and obey His Father. There is only one motive which could have prompted Him to undertake such a Purpose, and to go through with it, as He did, at all costs. That motive is love. He loved God, and He knew how good and blessed was the life of communion and fellowship, of trust and obedience which He lived with God. He loved God, and He knew God loved Him. And thus knowing what life and love are—the Life and Love of God, and the life and the love which man can share with God—love, which was His life, prompted Him, alike for God's sake and for man's

sake, to try and win the world, at all costs, to the life and the love which was His and God's.

What it cost Him we can only know in part; but we can see and know enough to be filled with wonder and amazement, gratitude and devotion at the spectacle of this strong Son of Man, and Son of God, living for the world's sake a life of toil and lowly service, and consummating that life by a death of utter self-renunciation—not deeming the surrender of life itself too great a sacrifice to make, in order to accomplish His divine purpose of saving the world, and leading the hosts of humanity to the glory and the blessedness of the eternal life.

Yes, it cost Him everything which it is possible for manhood to renounce; and the cost is inestimable, because we cannot comprehend, but only imperfectly apprehend, what the riches of His Manhood were.

We have ample evidence that He was so richly endowed that all the paths of life were open to Him. He could have succeeded magnificently in anything and everything which He chose to attempt. Wealth, fame, honour, power, the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, they might all have been His. He renounced them all, and chose instead the way of the Cross! And why? Because in His heart there burned an inextinguishable flame of love for the race with which, in spite of His incomparable superiority, He delighted to recognise and to claim kinship. That flame of love neither misunderstanding, nor contempt, nor slander, nor injustice, nor hatred could quench. The extremest manifestations of evil could not eclipse it; the most noisome exhalations from sin-corrupted

hearts could not stifle it. Prompted by love He lived for man; and prompted by love He died—the victim, yet the victor—surrendering all, yet thereby gaining all; despised and rejected of men, yet from that hour honoured and reverenced, and worshipped, and loved by all—all, that is, who have realised the amazing truth that He became poor, emptied Himself of His glory, died, *for them;* that they through His poverty, might be rich, through His renunciation of glory, glorious, through His death alive with the eternal life. We cannot dwell further on this transcendent theme of the love of Jesus, as it reveals itself in His self-sacrificing death. We will simply point out before we pass on, how supremely important an event in the history of the world that death reveals itself to be, in the light of this master-motive which we have just been considering. Without passing beyond the limits of "that which is natural" we are obliged to acknowledge that nothing in human history is comparable in importance—because nothing is so calculated to inspire hope, and kindle admiration and love—with this indubitable fact that one Man has appeared among the sons of men in whose heart burned a flame of unquenchable love for His fellow men—that one Man has lived who thought the world worth dying for, and who did die for it, in pure unselfishness, in order to accomplish the spiritual ends to which He had devoted His life.

In the light of that "natural" fact, the spiritual truths concerning God which He proclaimed surely receive confirmation enough to justify an acceptance of them; and the highest hopes of a glorious outcome

of this present travail of the creation are seen to be not merely baseless dreams.

In considering these grand and fundamental spiritual qualities which the deed of the Cross reveals in the Man Jesus—faith, obedience, love—we have contemplated His Passion as a whole.

But we must not neglect a closer inspection of His Character, as it is revealed in His words and actions during the long and weary hours which elapsed between His arrest and death, if we wish to make the sketch complete, even in outline.

Faith, obedience, and love, were the roots of His Life's tree, going deep down into the soil of eternal things; and from these roots sprang the noble stem of that sublime Purpose to accomplish which He devoted His life, and which He consummated by His voluntary death.

But root and stem developed further into leaf, and flower, and fruit. It is only when we contemplate the tree as it robes itself in the beauty of summer verdure, or displays its wealth of autumn fruit, that we can know and appreciate it truly and fully.

And so (to drop the metaphor) we must contemplate the virtues and graces which Jesus manifested, while He was draining this bitter cup which His Father gave Him to drink, if we are to form an adequate estimate of His Character, as this closing act of His life reveals it to us.

In order to duly appreciate His attitude and demeanour, we must distinctly bear in mind the peculiarities of the situation. We must remember

that He was perfectly innocent of any crime—so completely innocent that even the malice of His enemies could not invent a charge which offered a justifiable pretext for His condemnation.

Still He knew that He must die, and He was perfectly willing to die. It was His Father's will, and He bowed in complete submission to it. It was this conviction which prevented Him from taking any steps to avoid arrest, and which restrained Him from any attempt to vindicate His innocence before His judges. It led Him to adopt the only attitude which, in these peculiar circumstances, He could adopt—the attitude of complete passivity. He let things take their course, well knowing what course they would take. He made no attempt to persuade either the Sanhedrin, or Pilate, to deal with Him justly—made no appeal to the laws—no appeal to the facts of His life and teaching—no attempt to refute the false charges which were brought against Him, and no protest against the unjust sentence which was pronounced on Him.

But while, on the one hand, He made no attempt to persuade His judges to be just, He did nothing which could afford them any excuse for being unjust. Many innocent men have prejudiced their case by failing to comport themselves wisely and prudently before their judges; by indulging in passionate outbursts of scorn and indignation when dealt with unjustly, or by answering the questions put to them in such a way as to compromise themselves.

Jesus made no such mistakes. To the exasperation of the Sanhedrin, and to the wonder of Pilate, He

maintained a remarkable silence during the testimony of the false witnesses, and the clamour of His foes. It was only when the high priest solemnly adjured Him to speak, that He broke the silence—which if continued might have been construed into a denial of the truth—and replied to His question: it was only when Pilate put to Him questions which were relevant—questions which he needed to have answered in order to rightly understand and fairly judge the case—that He condescended to speak. To such irrelevant ones as "Whence art thou?" "What is truth?" He would vouchsafe no reply.

This impressive silence of His is in perfect keeping with that attitude of passivity which the voluntariness of His surrender necessitated. He is under a moral necessity—knowing as He does that it is His Father's Will that He should die—to abstain from making any attempt to avoid His fate. This He clearly recognises; and, not because He cannot, but because He will not, He makes no effort to influence the course of events. He both permits the powers of evil to seize Him in their grasp, and when they have seized Him to work their will upon Him. He who could heal the sick, and still the winds and waves, and raise the dead, will work no miracle to confound His foes. He who spake as never man spake, will utter no word to persuade His judges to be just. He deliberately places Himself where the tide of evil can surround Him, and as deliberately permits it unhindered to sweep Him to destruction.

There is a clear and evident connection between this passive surrender of Himself to the forces of evil, and

the Purpose which He had set Himself to accomplish in the world. The causes which produced the tragedy of His death rendered it necessary that there should be such a tragedy. He could not conquer evil except by submitting to it, and letting it do its worst with Him. He could not save Himself, and at the same time save the world. This, however, we will touch upon more fully later, when we come to consider the reasons which made His death a necessity. At present we merely note those features of His Character which this attitude and bearing of His bring into greatest prominence.

These are to some extent new to us, since the situation in which He is now placed has no parallel in His previous career. We find Him now for the first time the victim of gross injustice; subjected to vile abuse; treated with open scorn and contempt. We see Him suffering, not merely from the natural ills of the flesh, but from the blows and stripes of cruel and malignant enemies, and brutal strangers.

How does He comport Himself in these new and trying circumstances? With a humility, a meekness, and a self-control, combined with a noble dignity and a divine calmness, which are absolutely perfect! He shows Himself as strong—as Godlike—when He is called to endure, as He has shown Himself when called to act. At the fitting time, and at the call of duty, He who has proved Himself to be surpassingly rich in all that constitutes the wealth of manhood, can renounce it all, and place Himself on a level with the poorest and most helpless of His race; can humble Himself to submit to the very worst that sinful man

can do to Him, without complaint, without impatience, without an angry or imprudent word; can show Himself even more divine in this His hour of complete humiliation and weakness, than in the hour of His greatest exaltation and most superhuman power. This is the amazing fact which is disclosed to us when we contemplate the Man Jesus as the Gospel narratives of His Passion reveal Him to us—not merely the fact that He was willing and able to accomplish this act of absolute renunciation, but that He did it so *graciously*—did it, and yet displayed in the doing of it a Character no less perfect—a Spirit no less full of grace and truth—than in any previous part of His career. In this hour of failure, and shame, and pain, He is in no wise thrown off His balance; His Spirit is calm and unruffled; His mien displays a noble, quiet dignity; He exhibits inexhaustible patience, amazing meekness, perfect self-restraint, divine self-forgetfulness. In a word, He is still, in this hour when His Father subjects Him to the supremest test of life—calling on Him to renounce everything, to humble Himself to the lowest level of humiliation, to endure the extremest pangs which evil and cruel men can inflict on soul and body—He is still the Ideal Man—the perfect and Divine Son—full of grace and truth to a degree of fulness far beyond that to which (but for Him) we could have deemed the spirit of man capable of attaining, or could even have imagined the Divine Spirit to be.

There is one feature of Jesus' attitude during these closing hours of His life to which we have already briefly alluded, but which deserves to be

contemplated a little more closely: we allude to His perfect self-restraint and self-control—that feature which particularly impressed the impetuous Peter; "follow His steps . . . who when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, threatened not." (1 Peter, ii. 23). But it is not chiefly in the fact that He altogether abstained from wild and hasty words, when suffering from the abuse and blows of His enemies, that the strength of His self-control can be most clearly discerned. It is only when we realise what He might have done, but would not do—realise that this apparently helpless victim of the malice and cruelty of man, had at His command boundless power; unlimited ability to confound and annihilate His enemies—knew that all the forces of Nature were ready to do His will, and the Father prepared at a word to send the legions of Heaven to His rescue; knew, when Pilate boasted of his power, that the power which had been given him from above was as nothing compared with *His*—knew when, hanging on the Cross, His enemies taunted Him: "Let the Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the Cross, that we may see and believe" (Mark xv. 32), that He could come down, and confound them in a moment—it is only when we realise all this, that the perfection of the self-control which made the perfection of the self-renunciation possible, becomes apparent; and in spite of the previous evidences we have had of His complete self-mastery, and sublime unselfishness in the use of His power, we marvel that He could have done it. We are lost in wonder and astonishment when we contemplate such an exhibition of character as this—

when we behold Him who was subject to the fiercest storm of hate which ever beat upon a human soul, or wrecked a human life; and the victim of the cruellest wrong which man can inflict upon his fellow-man, remaining as loyal and true, as noble and strong, as patient and self-forgetful, as calm and unmoved, as we have previously found Him when facing His enraged fellow-townsmen; or dealing with the crisis of His affairs in Galilee; or setting His face to go to Jerusalem; or looking round about on all things in the temple, in the presence of the expectant multitudes. Of a truth, we are compelled to acknowledge, this Man is absolute master of Himself; a Man who can endure unshaken all the tests of life; invincible by circumstances; proof against all the assaults and seductions of evil—a Man to be rapturously hailed as King and Lord by all the sons of men who, amid the tests and temptations of life, have *not* stood firm.

We might continue indefinitely this inspection of the Character of Jesus as it reveals itself in the way in which He bore Himself during His Passion. For the fulness of grace and truth which He displayed orbs itself more and more fully the more we contemplate it: we cannot exhaust the theme.

But we trust we have said sufficient to convince the reader that it is inexhaustible—that the Character which we have been contemplating is a Character boundless in its fulness, and flawless in its perfection.

Some may say that the attempt we have been making to show that this is the case is a superfluous one; but we have not been writing for such. If others say that what we have been writing has not led them to

conviction, we cannot hope to produce conviction in them by pursuing this line of meditation any further.

We pass on to consider the important point which remains to be discussed; the question with which we have come face to face more than once in the course of this chapter: Why was it necessary that Jesus should die?

The ground we have already traversed in the previous pages clearly indicates the direction in which we must look, if we are to find an adequate reply to that question.

We have pointed out that His death stands in close, organic relation to the Purpose which He set Himself to accomplish; that He very early in His career, if not at the very commencement, recognised its necessity, and steadily contemplated it as the consummation of His work.

What we have now to do is to endeavour to discover the reasons for that dire necessity—why the sublime Purpose that He set Himself to achieve could not be accomplished without His undergoing such a fate.

We shall take the first step towards answering that question by ascertaining the difficulties which interposed themselves to the accomplishment of that Purpose. What, let us ask, were the obstacles which lay in the path of any reformer and saviour of the race—which had to be overcome by any one who undertook the task of elevating humanity from the moral and spiritual condition in which Jesus found it—in which indeed the great majority of men still remain—to the dignity and fulness of the life of sonship with God.

They were mainly two—human ignorance, and human sinfulness.

The human race was in a state of ignorance—ignorance of God, and consequently of the life which God desired them to live.

True, this ignorance was not absolute. God has not left Himself at any time without witnesses in the world. Conscience has always, in every man, testified to some extent for Him. There has always been that light lightening every man who has been born into the world. And, in addition to that, to every nation have come, from time to time, men in whom the light of conscience has shone more clearly than in their fellows. Prophets, seers, poets, philosophers—every nation has had its share of these; not all equally endowed, nor all manifesting the light in the same way, but all alike in this respect:—they have had a clearer insight into truth and righteousness, and caught glimpses of a higher ideal of life than those among whom they lived.

The nation to which Jesus belonged, and to which He confined His energies, has been, we need hardly point out, the one most favoured in this respect; and its literature—in which the truth and light which its most gifted men apprehended, is enshrined—rightly, on that account, takes precedence over all other literatures, and has become part of the one great world-book, the Bible.

The light and truth which the gifted men of that nation apprehended was, as we now know, partial and incomplete. Their highest conceptions of the Character of God fell far short of the full truth; as conse-

quently did also their highest ideals of life and conduct. This they themselves recognised, and continually and consistently anticipated the advent of One who would fulfil their hopes and aspirations, and give them a satisfying revelation of truth and righteousness.

We know how they received Him when He actually appeared. The reason for that we will not consider at present; it will become abundantly evident when we come to consider the second great difficulty which a world-reformer has to encounter.

What we wish to point out now is that if ignorance, or lack of full knowledge, had been the only difficulty which such a reformer had to encounter, a life such as Jesus lived would indeed still have been a necessity, but not such a death as He died.

The world would have needed—did need—a fuller revelation of the Character of God, to supplement the incomplete conceptions of the Hebrew prophets and seers; and a fuller manifestation of life and conduct than it had previously beheld in the lives of its most gifted and saintly men; to dispel the darkness of ignorance, or to change the twilight of partial knowledge into the full daylight of the truth; but it would not have required Him who embodied this complete revelation of truth and light to die a cruel and shameful death.

To have taught and lived the truth would have been, in that case, sufficient for the accomplishment of His purpose: His life might have been an idyll; there would have been no need for it to be a tragedy.

It was, then, we are forced to conclude, that disease

and bias in human nature which we call *Sin*, which made His death a necessity. It was the second, and by far the greater difficulty which the world's reformers have had to encounter, which He—by a divine instinct—recognised could only be overcome at such a cost as that. Oh! the wonder of it! That He was willing to pay that price in order to overcome it!

We have brought the reader now to the point at which "That which is natural" in the death of Jesus links itself indissolubly to "that which is spiritual." The conclusion we have come to, that it was human sinfulness which made Jesus' death a necessity, brings us face to face with the central doctrine of Christianity—the doctrine of the Atonement. All Christians agree that by His death Jesus made atonement for the sins of the world. They differ widely in their conceptions of *how* He did this; but *that* He did it, they are at one in agreeing. However different have been their conceptions of the *modus operandi*, they have all alike regarded His death as the basis of assurance that the guilt of their sin has been removed; that its power over them has been broken; and that henceforth a new life—a life of filial relations with the God and Father of the Lord Jesus—commences; a life whose only limit of expansion is "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

But this recognition of the saving efficacy of the atoning work of Jesus is impossible as long as we walk by sight, and keep our feet on "that which is natural."

It is impossible because the sense of guilt, which

invariably accompanies the consciousness of sinfulness, is not merely, or chiefly, the sense of wrong which we have done to our fellow men, but the sense of wrong which we have done to God; and it is not satisfied by the assurance of the forgiveness of our fellow men; it craves for, and can only be satisfied by, the assurance that God forgives.

How can that assurance be gained? How can sinful man attain to the conviction that "there is forgiveness with God, that He may be feared"? The unanimous answer which all who have attained to that conviction give to that momentous question is, that it can only be apprehended by Faith. And ever since the Man whose Character we are contemplating lived, and died, and rose again, the unanimous verdict of the centuries has been that "in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men wherein we must be saved." That is to say, Faith—which can be clearly distinguished from *credulity* by the fact that it always rests on grounds which are satisfactory and satisfying, both to the reason and to the moral sense of the individual who exercises it—Faith has found nothing on which she can rest, with anything like the same feeling of confidence with which she can rest on the facts of the life, and death, and resurrection of Jesus; she has found no man save Him, in whom she can place entire reliance; she has found no grounds of assurance concerning the mercy and the love of the Creator comparable with those which are furnished by the teaching, person, and work of the historic Jesus.

What we desire to clearly point out now is that, though faith has found it possible to rest securely in Him, it is faith, and faith alone, which will enable any man to attain to, or to continue in, that resting-place. The truth which faith can apprehend—that in Jesus is to be found a true and full manifestation of the Life and Heart of the Eternal Father—the clear assurance of His mercy towards, and His love for, man—is a truth which can only be apprehended by faith. It is a truth which "never can be proved." It is impossible, by any kind of demonstration, to prove absolutely that Jesus' teaching concerning God and Life is true; it is impossible to prove that His life, beautiful and wonderful though it is, is a true manifestation of the life of God; it is impossible to prove that by His death, God "commends His love towards us." Sight and reason fail us directly we try to pass beyond the limits of the "natural." Faith alone can grasp the spiritual—can apprehend the things which are not seen, and which are eternal.

> "The steps of faith
> Fall on the seeming void, and find
> The rock beneath."

Our endeavour in this work has been to lead the reader step by step to this point, where sight ends and faith begins—the point at which the recognition of the amazing uniqueness of the Character of Jesus and admiration of His Mind and Spirit, can pass, by an easy transition, into trust in Him as the Son of God. Surely, after what we have seen Him to be, and what we have seen Him willing to do, the

step onward into faith in Him as the Son—one in Heart, and Mind, and Will with the invisible Father, whom He proclaimed, in fellowship with whom He lived, in obedience to whose will He died—is not difficult. It is, at any rate, far more difficult to discover, or invent, an adequate explanation of Him, when this step is not taken. And seeing that, in the light of the conclusion we have come to—that it was human sinfulness which made His death a necessity—we cannot proceed further in our inquiry without taking this step of faith—(for we cannot in any adequate degree understand why it was necessary for Him to die, in order to overcome the difficulty which human sinfulness interposed to the accomplishment of His Purpose, unless we accept Him as God's authorised Messenger and Representative, and recognise that, in some way or other, there is an indissoluble connection between His self-sacrificing death and that assurance of God's forgiveness which mankind absolutely requires, if the burden of the guilt of sin is to be removed)—we will assume that the reader is now prepared to take that step: to believe that "God in Christ forgives us." Thus, and thus only, can we open the way for the inquiry: Why was it necessary for Him to die, before, and in order that, Sin might be overcome, man be reconciled to God, and the divine life of Sonship be entered upon by the human race?

This great question can be regarded from two points of view—the human and the divine. There are two parties to every reconciliation—two persons whose needs and requirements are to be considered.

No full answer to the question can be obtained, unless we look at it in both these aspects.

Let us first of all look at it from the point of view of the needs of man—the subjective view, as it is commonly called.

Man needed— we have pointed out—the assurance of divine forgiveness. How, let us ask, could that assurance be conveyed to him?

Two methods by which the truth could be made known at once suggest themselves—two methods by which "in divers portions," and with more or less completeness, it has been again and again revealed to the world.

The first method is by the truth being *taught*—by its authoritative proclamation, as a message delivered from God, by some prophet or seer of finer moral fibre, and keener spiritual insight than his fellows, who has apprehended it, or to whom it has been revealed.

This, as we know, was the method by which the truth was conveyed to the Hebrew nation. The Hebrew literature is crowded with proclamations of the mercy and forgiveness of Jehovah. And the men who proclaimed the truth unhesitatingly claimed to be authorised by God to make the proclamation; their final court of appeal was always a "thus saith the Lord."

But the history of the Hebrew nation abundantly testifies to the fact that this method alone was not adequate for the needs of the human heart.

The prophets' continual announcement of God's willingness to forgive, and their urgent calls to re-

pentance and reformation, failed to produce any widespread conviction, or any lasting moral reformation. Their scornful and uncompromising contempt for and denunciation of sacrifices, produced little or no effect. Men continued to endeavour to propitiate the deity by sacrifices and offerings, even though their prophets proclaimed that God abhorred them. The mere proclamation of the divine forgiveness was insufficient. Men deeply conscious of sinfulness are not in a position to accept a mere message. Their sense of guilt is too keen, and their conceptions of the Character of God—warped by sin—are too imperfect, to permit them to believe that He is willing to freely forgive them. Justification by faith is a truth to which they cannot attain. They think that He requires works as well—not merely the work of repentance and reformation, but the performance of some act, or the observance of some rite or ceremony, which is costly and laborious; which will assuage His supposed wrath, and cause Him to look with favour on the doer of them.

The continuance of the temple sacrifices right up to the time of Jesus, and the laborious attempts of the religious classes in His day to win justification by the works of the law, abundantly testify to the fact that the needs of the sinful heart of man could not be adequately met by the mere proclamation of the truth of the divine forgiveness. A few could, and did, receive it—those who constituted the spiritual aristocracy of the nation; but, for the needs of the nation as a whole, it was inadequate; and much more, therefore, was it inadequate for the needs of the whole world.

The second method by which the assurance of the divine forgiveness could be (and has been) conveyed to Man, is by the manifestation of the Divine Character in life. To live the truth—to manifest a merciful, and long-suffering, and magnanimous spirit to the world—that, especially when combined with a profession of faith in the mercy and pity of God, and most especially when combined with the claim to be God's prophet and representative, has never failed to arrest the world's attention, and to produce, at any rate in some, the conviction of its truthfulness.

But that method, too, has proved inadequate for the needs of the world. Sinful men can no more be brought to believe that God freely forgives them, because they see a fellow-man manifesting a forgiving spirit—even though that manifestation is consistent, and is given by one who is an acknowledged saint—than they can be brought to believe the message alone. The salvation of the world would have been an easy task, if the example of beautiful lives, and forgiving dispositions, had been sufficient to assuage the consciousness of guilt—to convince men that that was the spirit of God's life, and to lead them to repentance and reformation. The power of a godly life has undoubtedly been sufficient to lead many to God: those who have been, spiritually, most richly endowed, and who have never sounded the deeper depths of sinfulness, have been able, in all ages, to trust in the forgiveness of God, and have been stimulated to live righteous and holy lives, by the influence which godly lives have had over them.

More particularly since Jesus lived His perfect life, many men have found it possible to accept,

and to rest content with, the testimony of that Life to the Character of God; and have not felt the need of seeking for any deeper ground of assurance, or any more powerful stimulus to righteousness.

But it is a notorious fact that those forms of Christianity which have sprung from the teaching of this aspect of truth alone, have not manifested the signs of a healthy and permanent vitality; and have not flourished as living branches of the true vine. They have conspicuously failed to win the masses; because they have failed to proclaim the message of the divine forgiveness in such a way as to convince the more depraved, and to present the Divine Character in such aspects of winning loveliness as to compel sinful hearts to yield, and sinbound wills to submit.

As a matter of fact, we know that the effect produced on the more sinful of mankind, by the spectacle of a righteous and holy life, has generally been the reverse of that which is needed. Such lives have aroused, not contrition and faith, but hatred, and all the most diabolical feelings and passions of which the human heart is capable. Evil, far from being overcome by such manifestations of the truth, has, in the presence of it, been stimulated to greater activity. It caused the Jewish nation to kill the prophets, and stone them that were sent unto them. It committed its wildest outrage—it revealed itself in blackest form —against Him who was the very light and truth of God. He manifested the truth, as we have seen, to a degree beyond which it is impossible to conceive or imagine anything more perfectly divine; and they crucified Him.

The line of thought which we have been following,

—and especially the terrible fact to which we have just alluded—brings us face to face with a second great need of sinful man; a need which indeed, when the gravity of the fact of human sinfulness is adequately realised, cannot but be regarded as of primary importance; for it must be met before any message or demonstration of the divine forgiveness can have a chance of acceptance.

We refer to the need which many men have (an unfelt need, but none the less real on that account) of having the fact of their sinfulness brought home to them.

Men must be convinced that they are sinners, and must feel the need of forgiveness, before they will begin to look for a convincing assurance of forgiveness. In theological language, conviction of sin must precede repentance.

Now the history of the Hebrew nation, and the tragic termination of the life of Jesus, demonstrate most clearly that that need cannot be adequately met, either by the most scathing exposure of the wickedness of men's lives, and the most urgent calls to repentance, or by the clearest demonstration of what God requires of His creatures—whether that demonstration be given by teaching, or by a holy life.

The Hebrew prophets, and Jesus Himself, employed these methods in order to overcome that initial difficulty in the way of the salvation of men, and failed. Their scathing denunciations aroused anger, not remorse; their calls to repentance fell on ears too deaf to hear; their righteous lives kindled hatred, not respect and reverence. They were stoned, and

killed, and crucified, because they failed to arouse in those who most needed it, the *desire* for better things; because none of these methods are powerful enough to perform that process of spiritual chemistry which the stony heart of man must undergo before repentance and reformation are possible—the breaking-up of its stubborn base of pride and self-will, and the transmutation of these flinty elements into the saving salt of contrition, and the hydrate of humility.

There is no necessity for dwelling further on this great primary need of the sinful heart of man—this tremendous difficulty which must be faced and overcome before any reformer can begin to hope for success. It is a difficulty, the greatness of which, in the case of any reformer daring to embrace the whole world in the scope of his endeavour, can only be accurately estimated by realising what sin is at its worst—in men like Iago, or Cæsar Borgia, or those who crucified Jesus.

But we have not yet enumerated all the needs of man which have to be met before he can be saved from sin, and won to the life of holiness.

For, even if we suppose the difficulties we have enumerated to have been overcome—even if we suppose conviction of sin, and recognition and acceptance of the divine mercy to have been accomplished—he needs yet a double assurance, before he can begin the attempt to work out his salvation.

Conviction of sin does not free him from the power of sin; it only enables him to realise how completely sin holds him in its octopus grasp. The assurance of pardon will arouse him to no effort to shake himself

free from its grip, unless it is accompanied by the hope that he *can* thus free himself. The good news that God freely pardons sin, must be a continual source of sorrow and anguish to the contrite sinner who sees no prospect before him, except that of going on sinning. He needs some clear and satisfying assurance that sin can be overcome; the hope that in the future he will not need God's forgiveness as much as he does now; the hope that ultimately he will not need it at all. That is, he needs the assurance and the hope that sanctification is possible—that the time will come when his life will be altogether well-pleasing in the sight of God, because altogether free from the power of sin, and altogether ruled by righteousness.

And meanwhile—while this is only an assurance and a hope, not a realised fact—he needs strength, power, to begin, and to continue to the end, the struggle and conflict with sin—power to master the evil dispositions, and inclinations, and habits which are the only too evident proofs of the dominion of sin over him. Where is he to find this assurance, and hope, and power? Not within himself. His own condition furnishes no ground for hope, but only for despair. He knows only too well that sin has him in its grip, and that he is powerless to shake it off. He most likely has made the attempt, time and again, before he got to his present position, and has failed. By bitter experience he has proved that he is fast bound by a chain of sinful tendencies and habits, and that it is too strong for him to break. What he absolutely needs is some power of which he can avail himself, stronger

than the power of sin; some emotion, some affection, some attractive influence, which shall impart new strength to his spirit, which shall enable him to shake off the fetters with which the past has shackled him, and to set out joyfully on a new course.

Where is such power to be found? Not in any moral teaching, however pure and lofty. Duty and righteousness have no power of themselves to get themselves accepted and embodied in life. They can testify, they cannot constrain. Not in a holy and righteous life, unless that life is linked by indissoluble bonds to the life of the sinner. "Example is better than precept" undoubtedly, but the power of example is only strong in cases where the hope of achievement is present—that is, when the consciousness of the possession of the power to copy the example is already there. And in the case we are contemplating, it is just that consciousness of power which is lacking. The spectacle of a holy life will only heighten the contrite sinner's despair, so long as it stands before him merely as an example: he will see in it a model of what he might have been, and ought to have been; but he will derive from the contemplation of it no quickening impulse: he may admire, but he will not be stimulated to imitate. Only when the cold alpine snows of purity become tinged with the ruddy hues of affection, will his pulses begin to beat more quickly as he contemplates them; only when the pure and holy one comes near, and taking the sinner's hand, looks into his face with the look of love, and demonstrates by irrefutable proofs that for love's sake he is willing to link his life with his—to

share the burden of his sin, to help him, cheer him, live for him, and die for him if necessary—only then will he be stimulated to imitation; compelled by the power of love to prove himself not all unworthy of such great condescension.

And there is yet another need which sin has created, which we have just alluded to above. The sinner needs some one to share with him the *burden* of his sin. All sin has to be paid for by some one, for all sin is violation of God's laws, and none of God's laws can be violated with impunity.

The burden of *guilt*, until it is removed by the acceptance of pardon, must be borne by the sinner himself; no one can share that burden with him. But the burden of the consequences of sin—the pain, the sorrow, the misery which it entails—*must* be shared by some one; the sinner cannot, if he would, restrict all the consequences of his sin to himself.

In other words, sin can only be atoned for, its debt paid, by vicarious suffering—by the innocent sharing with the guilty the penalty which is always attached to the transgression of the divine laws.

But there are two kinds of vicarious suffering, and there are very important differences between the two.

The most common form of it is that in which the innocent suffer for the guilty either unconsciously, or unwillingly. We are all living examples of this form of vicarious suffering. We suffer every day and hour of our lives for the sins of our progenitors, and the sins of those with whom we associate. The harvest of pain and misery which sin entails is very

often not reaped (it is not exaggerating the truth to say, it is never fully reaped) by the generation that sows it. God visits the sins of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation. And the worst natural consequences of sin, and even many of its spiritual consequences, are not confined to the sinner; they work out their effects on those who may have been, and often are, wholly innocent of any participation in his sin.

But, in the vast majority of cases, this sin-bearing is not done consciously; and—what is still more important to note—even if it is done consciously, it is not done *willingly*.

We often cannot fully trace the causes of our sufferings—sometimes we cannot trace them at all; but when we can trace them, the feelings they arouse in us against those who have brought them upon us are, almost invariably, those of anger and resentment. We find it very hard, if not impossible, to forgive those who have done us such wrong, and we only endure the wrong because we are compelled to, not because we are willing to endure it.

We need not dwell further on this form of vicarious suffering; it is too familiar a form to need insisting on. We will only point out that this form of it, as it is free from merit, is also free from efficacy, so far as the cancelling of the consequences of sin is concerned.

Being unwilling, in the vast majority of cases, to accept these consequences, men bear only that portion of them which they are absolutely compelled to bear, passing on to others the remainder. Thus the bitter harvest which they have been compelled to reap they

do not destroy (as they might do if they were willing sin-bearers), but scatter it as seed in the fields of other lives; where it is only too certain to germinate, and produce fresh harvests in the future.*

But there is another kind of vicarious suffering; that, namely, which is endured not merely in the place of, but also for the sake of another; that which is both conscious and willing, and which consequently has an altogether different moral quality from the first, and produces altogether different results.

This kind the world has always regarded as meritorious—deserving of honour and praise; because its spirit is so unlike, and so much better than, the spirit in which the majority of men endure the consequences of others' sins. And the world has also, to some extent (though not often fully and clearly) realised that this kind of vicarious suffering is efficacious also, and that by it, and by it alone, the consequences of sin can be annihilated.

Let us consider this kind of vicarious suffering atten-

* We may give as an example the case (we have used the illustration further on, but we will point to it here for the sake of clearness) of one who inherits some physical weakness or disease, which is the direct result of sins which his progenitors have committed. If such an one (who, we will suppose, is unfit to marry) is not willing to accept that restriction of life's joys which is the penalty that must be paid if the consequences of the sin are to be annihilated, and consequently transmits to another generation the disease from which he suffers, he is a partial sin-bearer, inasmuch as he is a sufferer from the disease which is the direct result of sin; but he is an unwilling sufferer, whose vicarious suffering is without merit, and also, it is obvious, without efficacy, so far as the cancelling of the consequences of sin is concerned.

tively, that we may realise its true nature, and understand how and why it can annihilate sin.

It is distinguished from the other—we have pointed out—by the fact that it is a conscious and a willing sacrifice, *i.e.*, that he who thus sacrifices himself realises what he is doing when he takes upon his own shoulders the burden of consequences which sin entails—that he counts the cost of pain, and suffering, and self-renunciation which it will involve, ***and is willing to pay it.*** This kind of vicarious suffering consequently implies and involves condescension on the part of him who makes it—a voluntary descent, from a position of superiority or advantage, to the level of an inferior and less advantageously circumstanced life; a voluntary appropriation of burdens which he is not compelled to bear, and only can bear by identifying himself, more or less closely, with the life to which he stoops.

There have been many glorious examples of this kind of vicarious sacrifice in all ages—instances too numerous to quote of men and women who have sacrificed position, fame, reputation—even life itself—for the sake of the poor, the wretched, and the sinful.

And in all cases the impelling motive has been the same; since there is only one motive which is strong enough to induce any human spirit thus to condescend, —only one impulse which can move the soul so powerfully as to make it willing to share the pain and the sorrow of other lives:—and that is the impulse, the passion of love.

No voluntary vicarious suffering is possible without love. Love may not always be the only impelling

motive, and it may often be present in the lower form of pity, rather than in the higher form of affection, but it must always be present in some degree, and in some form, as a living force in the heart of any one who voluntarily stoops to share the burden of other lives. It is the only spiritual force which will give a man strength to endure those things which are naturally repugnant to him, and from which flesh and blood shrink—pain, and misery, and disease—strength to endure also those things which wound his spirit more than any physical evils do his flesh—foul speech, sordid ambition, mean selfishness, suspicion, scorn and contempt, the rejection of his offers of help by those whom for love's sake he stoops to save.

Vicarious sacrifice can go, and has gone, to the length of enduring some or all of these physical and moral evils; the length to which it is willing to go being dependent on the strength and purity of the impelling motive, love. The man in whom love is strong enough, must and will go all lengths, in taking upon himself the burden of the consequences of sin, and identifying himself with the lives of sinners—even to the extent of suffering death at their hands for their sake.

The reader will note that we are careful to say, the burden of the *consequences* of sin—not its guilt. For he who voluntarily becomes a sin-bearer for others, while he can and will, in proportion as his love is strong and pure, endure anything and everything that sin and sinners can do, cannot share with the sinner the *guilt* of his sin, nor that consciousness of alienation from God, and of the wrath of God, which sin

produces. There are personal relations between God and every spirit which He has made, with which no other spirit can identify himself—amid the sanctities of which he cannot intrude. By facing and enduring the worst manifestations and the worst consequences of sin, the sinbearer may—nay, must—realise both its exceeding sinfulness, and God's exceeding wrath against it; but he cannot realise it as *his* sinfulness, and as God's wrath against *him*.

That becomes more and more impossible in proportion to the degree in which the sin-bearer is himself free from sin, and in sympathy with God, and animated by His master-motive of love.

Concerning the meritoriousness of such vicarious sacrifice there is no need for us to speak. It compels our praise, and esteem, and reverence; we instinctively do it homage, and recognise that its spirit is that of a higher, diviner life than the life of this sin-enthralled world. It is—men have always felt—a breath, a manifestation of the life of God.

Nor is there much need for us to dwell upon its efficacy—at any rate not upon its efficacy as a saving and uplifting power in the lives of sinners.

It is the one power which has proved itself strong enough to break the stony heart of the sinner: not always, we are compelled to admit, even when it has gone all lengths; often not soon nor easily; but it has succeeded again and again, where everything else has failed, in producing repentance and reformation in the hardest hearts. Its power has proved so great that we can venture to indulge the confident hope that, even when it has seemed to fail, it has only been because

the time limits of this life prevent us from noting the supreme effects which can be accomplished by its unwearied persistence.

There is, however, perhaps more need to dwell a little on the efficacy of this kind of vicarious sacrifice as a salutary absorbent of sin; and as an annihilating force, when it interposes itself between the sinner and at least some of the consequences of his sin.

It has not always been clearly understood that it is by this kind of vicarious sacrifice alone that the effects of sin can be checked and annihilated—that the seed which the sinner sows can by this means, and by this means alone, be rendered sterile, and prevented from springing up in new harvests of pain and woe.

And yet it is obvious that, whenever you find a man willing to take upon himself the consequences of the sins of others—willing to bear the effects of which sin has been the cause, whatever form of pain, or sorrow, or woe, these effects may assume—you find a barrier beyond which the effects of sin cannot pass.

The man who, suffering in body for the sins of his progenitors, accepts the burden thus laid upon him, and resolves not to marry, in order that his burden may not be transmitted to the next generation, by this act of voluntary self-sacrifice, absorbs these effects of sin. He checks their energy as effectually as the target checks the energy of motion in the bullet; he transmutes it by the opposing force of love, into energy of a different kind.

Similarly the husband or wife, the brother or sister, the mother or child, or friend who voluntarily share

the burden of consequences, which the sins of those with whom they are associated have heaped up,—sacrificing their own pleasure, and happiness, and comfort, and health, in order to make that burden lighter for others—effectually prevent these consequences from producing further effects of a similar kind. They accept part of the wages of sin which others have earned; wages which sin always pays, but never pays *twice;* wages which, by voluntarily retaining—instead of spending them as most men do—they cancel.

We have been careful to say "some of the consequences," "part of the wages"; because just as no sinner can hand over the guilt of his sin to another, so there are some of its wages which he is bound to retain. No one can take up, in the sinner's stead, the vitiated constitution which his sins have produced; no one can give him back his wasted years, his lost opportunities, his squandered physical and intellectual capital. If he remains in the far country after he has wasted his substance, he must remain a swineherd; if he returns to his father's house, it must be as a beggar, and only through his father's bounty can he be again enriched.

Before we close this brief exposition of the twofold nature of vicarious suffering, we cannot refrain from alluding to another remarkable property of vicarious sacrifice, although it does not lie strictly in the line of our present inquiry.

We have already hinted at it, in the language we have used to describe the absorbing and cancelling effects which such voluntary sacrifice accomplishes,

when it opposes itself to the outbreaks and consequences of sin.

Vicarious sacrifice does not simply annihilate these efforts and effects of sin. Energy of any kind it is impossible to annihilate; its form can be changed, its force remains for ever constant. The flight of the bullet is stopped by the target, but its energy is not lost; it is only transmuted from the force of motion into the force of heat. And similarly, when the efforts and effects of sin impinge themselves on the heart and life of a man who is willing to meet and bear them, they completely change their form, but they do not on that account fail to produce results. They are transmuted into spiritual light and heat; they act as fuel to feed the fire of the divine life; they stimulate the self-sacrificing soul to exhibit a more unwearied patience; to give a clearer manifestation of the fruits of the spirit, and a diviner revelation of self-renouncing love.

In the convicted and repentant sinner himself they begin to produce these results as soon as ever he begins to be a willing sin-bearer; in Him whom we are contemplating in these pages—who knew no sin—they struck out the amazing, the dazzling, the immeasurable splendour and warmth of spiritual light and heat, which radiate from the deed of the Cross.

In the light of this brief consideration of the needs of sinful man, the answer to the question we are considering becomes plain.

It is not too much to say that, in view of the difficulties which sin interposes in the path of a world-

Reformer, any man who undertook the gigantic task of rescuing mankind from the guilt and power of sin, would be bound to sacrifice himself even unto death.

He would need to do this: (1) because mankind requires a proof that God is willing to pardon sin, greater than can be given by the clearest and most emphatic teaching, and by the divinest manifestation of the truth in a holy, and merciful, and self-sacrificing life.

(2) Because the world required a manifestation of love and self-sacrifice so amazing and overwhelming, as to be capable of producing conviction of sin in the heart of the most hardened sinner, and of changing pride into humility, and self-will into a "broken and contrite spirit," in even the worst of men. (The world's need must be measured by the condition of the world's worst.)

(3) Because sinful men need an impulse and a power to enable them to shake off the bondage of sin, such as a love which is stronger than death alone can give.

(4) Because men needed the proof of a life obedient unto death—a life which could face the utmost assaults of sin and still be true and loyal to the highest duty—(*i.e.*, to the will of God), in order to gain the assurance that sin *could* be overcome.*

* This suggests the true answer to the question we left unanswered in a previous chapter, "Why did Jesus confine His energies to the narrow limits of His own country, and why did He not, when His nation rejected Him, go to His 'other sheep not of that fold'?" The answer is: Because in order to accomplish His Purpose He required to demonstrate that it was possible to be a Son in spite of all

(5) Because man needed some one willing voluntarily to share the burden of his sin—some one who should, by setting an example of perfect self-sacrifice, show how sin could be annihilated; some one to found an enduring society of voluntary sin-bearers, a society which should continue and complete the conquest of sin which its founder had begun.

Each of these reasons is sufficient in itself to demonstrate the necessity of the voluntary death of the man who should dare to attempt to save the world from the guilt and power of sin. To be successful in the attempt he would be bound to completely satisfy all these needs—bound to sacrifice himself even unto death—so that the illimitable mercy of God, and the all-surrendering (and therefore all-compelling) nature of love, and the perfection of obedience, and the most magnificent example of voluntary self-surrender, should all be fully expressed and revealed in that one act, and should demonstrate Him who accomplished it to be the Life, and Light, and Hope of the world, and the approved and accepted Messenger and Mediator between God and man.

Since the hour in which the gloom and dismay of Calvary were dissipated by the joyful news: "The Lord has risen," the conviction has been held by an

the assaults of evil. And nowhere could evil be encountered in greater strength, and in a more virulent form, than at Jerusalem. Moreover, the darkness of the deed which evil wrought upon Him could nowhere be so completely manifested as there. For the nation which crucified Him was the nation that had had the clearest revelation of truth and righteousness vouchsafed to it; and which consequently incurred a fuller share of moral responsibility in rejecting and crucifying Him than any other nation would have done.

ever increasing number of those who have constituted the successive generations of this sin-stained race, that Jesus on His Cross has revealed and expressed all this.

The most sinful have seen in Him crucified a convincing proof of the mercy of God; the hardest hearts, and most stubborn wills, have been broken by that amazing proof of love; the most sin-bound lives have gained from it the power to shake off the bondage in which they have been held; the most despairing have gained from it the hope and assurance that sin can be overcome; the most heavily burdened have seen in it a supreme example of sin-bearing—an effort and an agony which embraced the whole world's sin in the grasp of one mighty self-sacrifice; a sacrifice which, by showing how sin, thus willingly borne, can be transmuted into spiritual light and life, has made their burden light, and has enabled them to contemplate the groaning and travailing of the creation around them in the steady light of a glorious hope.

Having thus contemplated the death of Jesus from the standpoint of the needs of sinful humanity—having seen what abundant necessity there was that He who undertook the gigantic task of reconciling the world to God, should voluntarily surrender Himself to death, the question remains: In what relation does God stand to that voluntary death? Did this Son, when He voluntarily died, do more than overcome the obstacles which Sin had interposed between man and the attainment of His birthright? Were there also obstacles to be overcome in the Divine Nature?

To put the question quite plainly, did God require to be reconciled to the world; and is the death of Jesus His Son the means by which He reconciles Himself; as well as the means by which He reconciles the world to Himself?

The answer, clear and unequivocal, which the prophets of Israel, Jesus Himself, and the Apostles give to this question, is "No." There is no hint of any difficulty in the Divine Nature, which requires to be overcome before the divine forgiveness can be exercised, in any of the Old Testament writings: God's forgiveness is always represented as free, spontaneous, unrestricted.

There is no hint in the teaching, or in any of the recorded utterances of Jesus, that the Father requires to be propitiated before He will pardon penitent sinners. There is no trace in the life of Jesus of any feeling that He was enduring the wrath of God—no trace, even in His Passion, of any feeling or consciousness on His part that He was thereby reconciling His Father to His brethren, by paying a debt, of which God demanded payment, before He could or would be reconciled.

But, some readers may say: At least there is some trace of this view of the Atonement in the writings of the Apostles?

Again we are bold to say, "No." We cannot enter into a detailed examination of the various passages which (some have thought) give colour to this view. They are all of them figures of speech, drawn from those "shadows" of the truth—the ordinances of the Mosaic ritual; they cannot for a moment be placed

beside, or be regarded as modifying, the clear and reiterated statements that it is the grace and the love of God—His free, unrestricted impulse and feeling—which have been manifested in Jesus; not His favour which has been won for us by Jesus. The apostles, equally with Jesus, and with the prophets, consistently and unanimously declare the spontaneous and unqualified nature of the divine forgiveness. They continually set forth the death of Jesus as the sufficient ground and reason for the acceptance of that forgiveness by sinful man; but never as the sufficient ground and reason in the Divine Mind for the exercise of forgiveness.

This indeed is so clearly the testimony of Scripture, that there would be no need to assert the fact, were it not also a fact that conceptions of the Character of God, and of the nature of the Atonement, such as we have just controverted, have long held sway in Theology, and are by no means yet extinct. How has it come to pass that these erroneous conceptions have so long prevailed?

The answer undoubtedly is, that they have sprung from human ignorance and human sinfulness,—from an imperfect apprehension of the truth as it is in Jesus, and from the difficulty which sinful men have always experienced of apprehending the true grandeur, and fulness, and freedom of the divine forgiveness.

We cannot treat this interesting point as fully as it deserves. We would simply draw the reader's attention to the indubitable fact that it is difficult, if not impossible, for men who have deeply sinned, and

who have never felt the nobler influences of a pure and loving spirit, to realise at once the full grandeur of the Character of God revealed in Jesus. When such men come to realise their sinfulness, they realise both how much they need to be forgiven, and also how difficult—impossible, we may even say—*they* would find it to forgive those who have deeply wronged them, freely, and without any "quid pro quo." They are therefore fain to regard the Atonement in the only way in which, through the mists of sin and ignorance, they can contemplate it at all,—to grasp the fact, not as it really is, but as it seems to them to be; to see it in clearer light being impossible for them till their understandings, with their hearts, have received further expansion and illumination.

That this is the true explanation of the wide prevalence of these conceptions of the nature of the Atonement, is demonstrated by the history of the doctrine. The crude form in which it was at first promulgated (*i.e.*, that Christ's ransom was paid to the devil) has long been rejected; and since then it is very noteworthy that no modified form of this conception has won complete assent, and that the continual tendency of thought on the subject has been in the direction of minimising the difficulties which, it has been supposed, prevented God from exercising a free forgiveness. Many of the most thoughtful of modern writers limit His demands to a perfect exhibition of righteousness, and a perfect confession of man's sinfulness; thus eliminating the conception that there was anything *penal* in the sufferings of Christ, and making His Atonement purely moral and spiritual in its nature.

But though we are bound to attribute the conception that God needs to be propitiated, before He can or will exercise forgiveness, to human sinfulness and ignorance—though the prophets of Israel, and Jesus and His apostles alike consistently represented the grace, and mercy, and love of God as free, spontaneous, and unqualified by any restrictions—it does not follow that there is no objective side to the atoning work of Jesus Christ; it does not follow that it was simply the needs of sinful man which made His death a necessity.

There are, we have pointed out, two parties to every reconciliation. We have briefly reviewed the needs of one party—man—in the great reconciliation. What, let us ask, in view of the fact that mercy and love are free, spontaneous, original feelings and promptings of the Divine Nature, are the needs of the other Person—God?

There is one great need, we can unhesitatingly assert, which such a God must feel; and that is: the need for giving a full and complete expression to the feelings and promptings of His nature; the need, consequently, of a medium by which these could be satisfactorily manifested to mankind; the need of some one to perfectly express the glory of His grace and love.

Some *one* we say; for it requires no argument to prove that the Spirit and Life of God can only be adequately expressed by the spirit and life of a Man. No theophany, no demonstration or revelation of the nature of God either in nature, or through the medium of a superior order of spirits, could reveal to mankind the Spirit and the Life of God so clearly and satisfac-

torily as the spirit and life of one "made in the likeness of men," "in all points tempted like as we are," yet "without sin," and dwelling among us, "full of grace and truth."

We trust that we have, by the line of thought we have followed in the previous pages, established the conclusion that God has found such a Medium, whereby His Name and Nature are fully expressed, in "the Man called Jesus."

We do not pretend to have fathomed the mystery of His human-divine nature; we have only attempted to lead the reader, by a contemplation of His perfect humanity, to the conviction that we have in Him a perfect expression of the glory of God—that He and His Father are "one" in spirit, and heart, and life. No metaphysics can satisfactorily explain the nature of this oneness, but the understanding can sufficiently apprehend it to accept it as a fact—a fact which shows God in man, and man in God, united in an eternal union.

The opinion has been widely held that, until God in the Man Jesus found such a perfect Medium, through whom He could, at one and the same time, both perfectly express Himself, and also perfectly realise His conception of humanity, He could not be reconciled to man.

That He was *un*satisfied with humanity until He thus saw in it His own image, and "received full satisfaction by beholding the perfect sacrifice of the will of the man to the will of God,"* in the life and death of

* *Vide* Robertson's Lectures on Corinthians. Lec. xlvi.

Jesus, we can well believe; but not that He was *dis*satisfied, and required such a sacrifice before He could be reconciled to His creatures.

Jesus undoubtedly consummated the Purpose of God with regard to humanity; and by so doing satisfied the Father's Mind and Heart. But it is impossible to hold that the state of the Father's Mind and Heart previous to the life of Jesus was a state of dissatisfaction, which nothing but such a life as Jesus lived, and such a sacrifice as He offered, could change to complaisance, in the sense of making Him willing to be reconciled to man.

For this implies a power on the part of man to thwart, through the abuse of moral freedom, the Purpose of God, which we cannot maintain that He possesses without landing ourselves in inextricable difficulties.

For there is another need which—speaking with all reverence, and acknowledging that we cannot fully comprehend the ground-plan of the Creation, and that in all probability we have not yet discovered the right category for the mystery of evil—we may yet affirm that the God with whom Jesus is "one," must have felt, ever since man began to misuse the capacity for moral life with which He had endowed Him.

Whether that misuse was inevitable or not, God must always, since it became a fact in the history of the race, have felt the need to which we refer; though our conceptions of its character must necessarily be modified by our conceptions of the relations in which evil stands to the purposes of the Creator.

That need, stated in its most general form, we may define as *the need of accomplishing the Purpose which He purposed when He created man.*

It is impossible to hold that man's misuse of moral freedom could thwart the Purpose which God had in view when He endowed mankind with it. It is very difficult to hold that that misuse was not foreseen, and deliberately anticipated, and included in the scope of the Divine Purpose:—foreseen as a necessary incident in the working out of that Purpose, and deliberately included in it as the best way in which to accomplish its consummation. But, in whatever relation we regard evil as standing to the Purpose of the Creator, we can boldly say that, when it actually appeared, He needed to express in an adequate and conclusive way His superiority to it; nay more, His acceptance of the responsibility for it, and His willingness to bear all the loss, and to share with His creation all the pain and sorrow which its presence involves.

Consequently, the Man who completely manifested the Spirit and Life of God was under a moral and spiritual necessity to sacrifice Himself vicariously to the utmost, *i.e.*, to die for the world. In no other way could He adequately express the willingness of Him with whom He was "one" to accept the consequences resulting from His creative Purpose; in no other way could He adequately demonstrate that the end will justify the means, and that the final victory will rest with all-enduring Love.

Thus God required His perfect Son to voluntarily

sacrifice Himself even unto death; because no otherwise could the fulness and intensity of the love wherewith He loved the world be manifested, and the unqualified nature of His forgiveness be expressed.

Thus "Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf," and required Him to take upon Himself the extremest consequences of sin; in order to demonstrate that the God who created evil (Is. xlv. 7) takes upon Himself the full responsibility; that from the beginning He has counted the cost of the Plan and Idea of humanity which He conceived, and which He is working out on the stage of Time—has counted the cost, and is willing to pay it; has been all through the ages paying it indeed. For Jesus' sacrifice and sufferings only represent and express what the God with whom He is "one" has been doing and bearing ever since sin entered into the world; they are only a perfect manifestation of the eternal endurance of wrong, and the eternal sympathy with pain and sorrow, which God has suffered and felt. They show how God triumphs over sin by the untiring patience, and forbearance, and endurance of Love; letting sin work out its full results, and accepting them Himself, that it may show itself to be "exceeding sinful," and that the souls He has made may learn "by means of evil that good is best."

And thus we arrive at the conclusion, that through the Cross of Jesus we gaze into the most beautiful and awful depths of the Divine Life, and find it to be a Life of pure and perfect love. For Jesus' Cross must ever remain the index to the sublimest mystery

of the Life of God upon which the human mind can meditate—the mystery of the *cost* to Him "who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all," of that full, free grace which is manifested in Jesus.

This light on the objective side of the Atonement—these glimpses into the abysmal depths of the Divine Mind—we get by contemplating the Character of Jesus as it is expressed in the Deed of the Cross; when by faith we grasp the truth that He who accomplished that Deed is the Image of the Invisible God, and the Son of His love.

Some readers may have been unable to take the step of faith which we have previously asked them to take, in order that they may place themselves in a position to contemplate these divine mysteries. If so, we must leave them to answer for themselves the question, in seeking to answer which we have felt compelled to pass from "that which is natural" to "that which is spiritual"—the question: "Why was it necessary that the Divinest Man who has ever lived on earth should die a cruel and shameful death?" We can only reaffirm our conviction that the true answer is, that it was *sin* which made that death a necessity—that He died to meet and satisfy the needs of man, and the needs of God, produced by the sinful condition of humanity.

This was the answer which His Apostles gave; this has been the answer which the overwhelming majority of His professed followers have accepted. No other answer has been given (and we venture to assert that no other answer can be given), which any thoughtful

man, contemplating the facts with an unbiassed mind, can regard otherwise than as hopelessly incomplete The alternatives which alone present themselves, if this answer is rejected, are indeed so inadequate, that they cannot be fairly regarded as answers at all: they leave the Deed of the Cross an insoluble enigma.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE RESURRECTION.

(Matt. xxviii., Mark xvi., Luke xxiv., John xx.)

WE have, in the previous chapters, endeavoured to unfold the Character of Jesus by considering some of the most striking incidents of His Life recorded by the Evangelists; and in the last chapter we have endeavoured to set before the reader the Character of the Man as it reveals itself in the last hours and in the supreme crisis of His life; and we have striven to gauge the meaning and significance of the death which He voluntarily died.

We trust we have in some measure enabled the reader to realise the unparalleled uniqueness of the Mind, and Spirit of the Man whom we have been contemplating; and have thus prepared him to anticipate an unparalleled sequel to that event which compels the biographer to inscribe "finis" to his record of the lives of other men.

For undoubtedly the contemplation of the Life and Character of the Man Jesus brings us face to face with a fulness of Life so boundless, and a sublimity of Character so unrivalled, that we are prepared to hear of an unique sequel to its astonishing earthly close. Marvellous and unexampled as the records

which the Gospels give us of the reappearances after death of this Man certainly are, they are not really more astonishing and unexampled than the records which they give us of His earthly life.

As we realise what He was, the possibility merges into probability, and the probability passes, by the aid of the evangelic and apostolic records, into certainty, that in the case of a Soul so elevated above the ordinary run of humanity—a Soul so charged with life, a Soul so closely linked in fellowship with God—the ordinary laws which produce the phenomenon of death would be relaxed. The destruction of the mortal frame in which that unique Soul tabernacled—that Soul so overflowing with love for our race, so dauntlessly bent on redeeming it from sin—might not, we can easily conceive, "could not," we can boldly say, when we consider the evidence for the Resurrection, and when we contemplate the need for such a post-mortem manifestation—banish it for ever into the silences into which the souls of other mortals pass.

We do not intend in this chapter to take up the controversy which has been carried on so long, and which is still being carried on, concerning the Resurrection. The arguments for and against the fact are accessible to all, and it would be superfluous to reproduce them here. We simply record our conviction that the testimony in favour of the fact is overwhelmingly strong. No attempt to overthrow that testimony, and to account for the teaching and belief of the Apostles, by any other hypothesis save the one which accepts the fact as true, has ever (we hold) come within measurable distance of success.

It will be advisable, however, for us to consider, before we proceed further, the true significance of the facts recorded in the Gospels concerning the reappearances of Jesus after His death; and also the teaching of the Apostles on the subject which we find in the Epistles. After that we shall be prepared to contemplate the *need* which there was for such a consummation of our Lord's earthly life—how necessary it was that His teaching, and life, and death should have such a consummation, if they were not to remain unprofitable and enigmatic. That there was such a necessity is not of itself by any means sufficient to prove the fact of the Resurrection; but after we have considered the facts recorded, and the teaching based on the facts, a consideration of the Apostles' and the world's need of such a consummation will, we think, strengthen and confirm the conclusion that the Man Jesus did indeed rise from the dead—thereby proving Himself to be the Son of God with power, and demonstrating that He had been "made after the power of an endless life."

It is the more necessary to consider attentively, first of all, the significance of the facts recorded concerning the reappearances of Jesus, as well as the teaching of the Apostles on the subject, because of certain misconceptions as to the real nature of the Resurrections which—we have reason to believe—are rather widely prevalent.

There are not a few people who have an entire belief in the fact of the Resurrection; but who, in their conceptions concerning it, fail to see its true significance. They lay chief—if not exclusive—

emphasis on the fact that the body in which Jesus reappeared was the same body in which He tabernacled while in the flesh—the same body in which He was crucified, and which was laid in the tomb.

Now a little consideration will, we think, make it evident that the chief emphasis ought to be laid, not on the similarities, but on the *differences* which manifested themselves to the disciples in the appearance and the movements of Jesus on the various occasions on which He came to them after His crucifixion, as compared with those which had been characteristic of His earthly career.

Doubtless it was absolutely necessary that He should so manifest Himself to them, as to convince them of His *identity;* and the best—probably the only—way in which to do this was by appearing in the nail-marked and spear-pierced body which they had laid in the grave. No other manifestation would have won them to entire conviction that it was He. Appearances either in a different body, or in a glorified form to which earthbound senses are unfamiliar, would have left room for doubt, or would have roused fear and dismay in their minds, rather than joy and hope.

But beyond the fact that by thus reappearing in the form which they had known, He completely established His identity, no importance whatever is to be attached to this aspect of His reappearances.

For there is no Gospel in it. It demonstrates the fact that the bodily life survived death in His case; and it would naturally arouse in them the joy which

we feel when one whom we think to be dead, comes back to life again.

But even if all doubt could in that case have been removed, as to whether He had really died; and even if His return to life could be taken as proof of the general fact of immortality, there would still be no Gospel in it. We should be at a loss to understand why the Resurrection of their Lord wrought such a change in the minds of His disciples, and why they consistently regarded it as the key-stone of the arch of Christian truth.

For there is nothing inspiring in the mere fact that the bodily life can survive death; there is nothing hopeful in the message which (in the case we are supposing) would have been the only message which their reappearing Lord could have communicated to His followers—the message that He was, after His death, continuing to live such a life as He had lived on earth.

Even if we could, in that case, satisfactorily explain the reason why He did not completely take up His earthly life again—as we may presume Lazarus, and the son of the Widow of Nain did—and could account for His speedy and complete disappearance, we could find no Gospel in such a reappearance. Though men instinctively cling to life, yet there have been few indeed who would have been willing to live their lives over again, and fewer still who could contemplate with equanimity an indefinite (to say nothing of an infinite) continuance of such existence as they have now. Endless existence, of the kind which the vast majority of the human race now endure, would mean

endless toil, suffering, and sin. To prove no more than that *that* lies ahead, is only to prove that existence is terrible, frightful,—involving mankind in endless dissatisfaction and woe.

But the accounts of Jesus' reappearances which we have in the Gospels; the effect which they produced on the disciples; and the teaching concerning them which we find in the Acts and in the Epistles, make it abundantly evident that the entire significance of the Resurrection lies in the fact, that it demonstrated that Jesus—while retaining His identity—had assumed at death a new and more glorious body than that in which He had lived and died, and had attained to a fuller and more glorious life.

It is true that we cannot form any definite or adequate conception either of the real nature and capacities of His Resurrection body, or of the fulness of the life to which He had attained. Probably He could not, if He had been willing (possibly He would not, if He had been able), have given His disciples, and the world through them, anything like a complete manifestation of the capacities of that body, or of the fulness of that life. The senses and the mind of man are probably incapable of perceiving and apprehending "the body which shall be," its relations to the material universe, and the full scope of its powers.

Nevertheless the records of the Resurrection appearances of our Lord make it abundantly evident that His Resurrection life was not merely the old life revived. There is even room for doubt whether the visible and tangible body in which He appeared was

*always* that physical frame in which He had been crucified. Mary at the sepulchre did not recognise Him at first when He spoke to her; "she supposed Him to be the gardener." And if we can account for her mistake by supposing that her grief, and the entire absence of any hope or expectation that she would ever see Him again, prevented her from recognising His voice, and that at His first question she did not look at Him; it is far more difficult to explain the fact that the two disciples with whom He walked to Emmaus remained in ignorance concerning His identity for so long. Except on the supposition that the physical form which He then assumed was not the familiar form of Jesus of Nazareth, it is not easy to suppose that face, voice, and manner could have been so disguised as to leave them unsuspicious, to the very end of that memorable interview.

Be that as it may, it is certain that even when the form in which our Lord reappeared was the very body of "flesh and bones" (Luke xxiv. 39) which had been nailed to the Cross, He was able to do in it things (such for instance as passing into the chamber in which His disciples were assembled when "the doors were shut" (John xx. 19), and disappearing at will) which are impossible to an ordinary mortal, and to which there is no parallel in the records of His earthly life.

We will not lay stress on the fact that in the interview with Thomas to which we have just alluded, He says "flesh and bones," rather than "flesh and blood," though the unusual expression does not seem without significance in view of the fact that the blood must

have been well-nigh drained from His body on the Cross, by the nail-wounds and the spear-thrust.

Nor yet will we lay emphasis on the fact that He asked Thomas to put His finger into the nail-wounds, and his hand into the hole the spear had made; though it is difficult to understand how such an operation could be performed on any one possessing flesh and *blood*. If the wounds had healed *naturally*, they would have closed; and even then, we must suppose a miraculous acceleration of nature's processes. If, as was apparently the case, they were open, we are almost compelled to suppose conditions of the physical frame in which He appeared to which our experience furnishes no analogy. But without laying stress on these facts, we have abundant evidence that our Lord controlled the body of "flesh and bones," in which He manifested Himself to His disciples, in a way markedly different from that which He consistently followed throughout His earthly life.

It is idle to speculate as to *how* He did this. We know too little concerning the laws of the physical universe either to attempt to explain the facts recorded, or to dogmatise concerning their impossibility.

We know nothing of the Resurrection body—of its relations with matter, or of the powers of the soul in it; nothing beyond the glimpse which is given us in the facts we are considering. We cannot say that it is impossible for the Spirit, after it has left the body, and entered that "body which shall be," to temporarily re-inhabit the cast-off frame. We cannot say that it has not power to reappear and establish its identity to our senses in some "astral" form,

which is like, though not identical with, the body which it has laid aside. We grope in vain for "explanations"; all is dark. Yet in the case of Jesus it is certain that He succeeded in convincing His followers, both that it was He himself who appeared to them after His death, and also that, though the same, He was not the same—that the body He had entered was a "glorious body," and not merely His earthly body resuscitated; and that the life which He had won was wide, and full, and free in ways, and to a degree, which indeed their minds could not comprehend, nor their imagination fully picture; but which nevertheless justified them in reposing in their risen Lord a most confident faith; and in building on the glimpse which He had given them of His continued life, a boundless hope; and inspired them to go into the world proclaiming that "life and incorruption" had been brought to light in Him.

This is the consistent doctrine of the Resurrection which we find both in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles.

The supreme importance which the Apostles attached to the Resurrection, even before they began their public ministry, is attested by the fact that when they undertook the filling up of the gap which the suicide of Judas had made in their ranks, it was the need in which they stood of having an additional "witness with them of His resurrection" (Acts i. 22), which Peter urged as the chief reason why they should appoint to the vacant place "one of the men who have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and went out among us."

In the address which Peter gave on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 14-36), in his defence before the Sanhedrin (Acts iv. 8-12), and in his speech in the house of Cornelius (Acts x. 34-43), it is on the fact of the Resurrection that we find him chiefly insisting—the Resurrection as the convincing proof that Jesus is Lord and Christ; the risen Christ as the source of their power; the Christ who had manifested himself to them, and with whom they "did eat and drink after He rose from the dead" (Acts x. 41), who had charged them to preach and to testify concerning Him.

Stephen, in his address to the Council, was interrupted before he got to the climax to which he was evidently working his way; but that if he had been permitted to end his speech, he would have proclaimed the Resurrection of "the Righteous One, of whom ye have now become betrayers and murderers," is evident from his exclamation after he had been interrupted: "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." (Acts vii. 56.)

Paul, in all his addresses recorded in the Acts, lays chief stress on the same fact; in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts xiii. 30-37); on Mars' Hill (Acts xvii. 31); on the stairs of the castle at Jerusalem (Acts xxii. 14); at Cæsarea before Felix (Acts xxiv. 15-21), and again before Agrippa (Acts xxvi. 8-23). But it is in his epistles that we get the clearest statements of the truth to which we are now drawing attention. The fact that Paul anticipated the second coming of the Lord in his own life-time does not

prevent him from realising that the significance of the Resurrection of Jesus, and the ground of hope which Christians find in it, consists in the fact that He demonstrated thereby that He had attained to a new and more glorious body and life; a body and life to which at death, or at His coming, those who believe on Him will likewise attain. "Our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation (*i.e.*, the present body) that it may be conformed to the body of His glory" (*i.e.* the body which He gave evidence of possessing after His Resurrection). (Phil. iii. 20-21). "That which thou thyself sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be . . . So also is the resurrection of the dead—it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." (1 Cor. xv.). "We know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle—"bodily frame" (R.V., margin)—be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. In this tabernacle we groan being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life. Now He that wrought us for this very thing is God." (2 Cor. v.)

We need not pursue this line of thought further. The evidence which we have adduced—both of facts and teaching—is consistent throughout, and seems to us to conclusively demonstrate the point on which we have been insisting, namely, that while Jesus

so manifested Himself to His followers after His death as to convince them of His identity, neither He nor they laid stress on the fact that He reappeared in the body in which He had been crucified, except for the purpose of completely establishing that identity.

What the Apostles *do* lay stress on—a truth with which, as we have seen, the facts recorded concerning His appearances are in complete harmony and endorse—is that their risen Lord, though the same, was not the same. Through the crucified form in which He at least twice reappeared (John xx. 20-27), and (possibly) through other human semblances which He temporarily assumed, they caught glimpses of a "body of glory," which had become the abode of His Spirit—a "spiritual body," a "habitation which is from heaven," "incorruptible," and endowed with power beyond the limits of human comprehension.

They lay stress on the fact that by His Resurrection He has conclusively demonstrated Himself to be the Christ; "declared Himself to be the Son of God with power" (Rom. i. 4); "brought life and incorruption to light" (2 Tim. i. 10); "begotten them unto a living hope—unto an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven" (1 Peter i. 3-4). In a word, His Resurrection convinced them that His life had not merely survived death, but had, in harmony with eternal laws, taken to itself, by the force of its own inherent vitality, a new and more glorious body, and stepped through the gates of death into an altogether higher plane of existence.

But the full significance of the fact of the Resur-

rection to the minds of His followers did not consist solely in the evidence it afforded them that their Master had survived the shock of death, and attained to a fuller and more glorious life. Nor can we understand the need for such an unique sequel to His life and death by confining our attention to this aspect of it alone.

Viewed in this aspect alone the Resurrection still contains no gospel for mankind. Jesus—as we trust we have abundantly shown in the previous chapters—was an altogether unique Specimen of humanity; endowed with a fulness of Spiritual Life than which we can conceive of nothing more perfect and complete; conscious of a fellowship with God, absolutely without parallel in human experience, and claiming a closeness of relationship with Him which extended to the perfect equality and oneness of perfect sonship.

His disciples hardly needed a Resurrection to convince them that such a Life could not be extinguished by death. The common Jewish belief would at least have enabled them to believe and hope that He and they would meet again "in the resurrection at the last day" (John xi. 24), even if His life and teaching had not enabled them to modify that belief into a conviction, that such a Life as He had could know no sleep in the tomb, but would continue without break in the silences which lie beyond death.

If the Resurrection had done no more than convince them that, in the case of their Master, the Jewish doctrine of the resurrection needed modification, its results would have been insignificant out of all

proportion to the startling and altogether unexampled character of the event. There would have been nothing in that on which to base a *personal hope.* It would not have convinced them that *they* at death would attain to a similar immortality.

But that is just the conviction to which, by the Resurrection of their Lord, they did attain. And in order to understand how it was that the Resurrection begat in them that "living hope," it is necessary to clearly realise that it demonstrated, not merely that Jesus had continued His Life in a "glorious body" after His death, but that He had done so *in harmony with the eternal laws which governed that kind of Life*—that the Life which He manifested on earth was necessarily, essentially, immortal in its nature; and that further He had quickened an identical kind of Life in them.

The Epistles, not only of Paul, but also of the other Apostles, abound with evidences that these were the convictions which filled the minds of Jesus' followers; and that it was the Resurrection of their Lord, and that event alone, which produced in them these convictions.

So numerous are the references to these facts in the Epistles that it will be impossible for us here to quote them all. We will simply draw attention to some of the most prominent.

We have already quoted the passages in 2 Tim. 1-10, and 1 Pet. i. 3-4, in which the writers speak of Jesus as the abolisher of death, and "our Saviour who brought life and incorruption to light"; and as having "begat them into a living hope—unto

an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." In these passages the conviction of the essentially immortal nature of their Lord's Life is evident; as well as the fact that their personal hope of immortality is based on the conviction that that Life has already been kindled in them.

We have also quoted from 1 Cor. xv., and need not allude to it further, save to remark that the whole of the long argument which is contained in that chapter, is directed to showing that the Christian hope of immortality pivots on the fact of the Resurrection. "If Christ hath not been raised then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain." "If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable." Christ by His Resurrection had shown that His Life, "sown in corruption," is "raised in incorruption"; "sown in dishonour," is "raised in glory"; "sown in weakness," is "raised in power"; "sown a natural body," is "raised a spiritual body." And Paul and his converts had been quickened with that Life by Him—"the last Adam"—who had become "a life-giving Spirit"; and consequently "at His coming," "we shall all be changed."* "For this corruption must

* We have already pointed out that it was the belief in the second coming of Christ during his own lifetime which led the Apostle to put the doctrine of the Resurrection in this form.

It has always seemed to the writer that the passage "the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised" (v. 52), is inconsistent with the main teaching of this chapter, as well as with the Apostle's teaching elsewhere concerning the Resurrection. For it implies that the dead "sleep," *i.e.*, do not pass at once into their "incorruptible" body, but lie dormant till "the last trump." This undoubtedly was the orthodox

put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." That is the gist of his argument.

The frequent references to "eternal life" in the Epistles all add to the weight of the evidence which they contain, that the Resurrection had assured the apostles of the imperishable nature of the Life which Jesus Christ had manifested; and that it was the fact that the same Life had begun in them which was the ground of all their hope. "The free gift of God is eternal life, in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. vi. 23). "God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" (1 John v. 11). "These things have I written unto you that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (v. 13).

Even more striking is the fact that the Apostle Paul, in 2 Cor. iv., regards "the life of Jesus" in him-

teaching of the Pharisees concerning the resurrection (with one important modification; for Paul teaches that they will not rise—as the Jewish doctrine held—in the bodies in which they had been buried, but in an "incorruptible" body), and doubtless the Apostle got it from that source. But it does not quite harmonise with what He says in v. 36, which implies that the death of the body, like the death of the seed, is synchronous with the quickening of the new life. Nor does it harmonise with his teaching concerning the Resurrection, in 2 Cor. v, where he plainly implies that we "shall be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven," as soon as "the earthly house of our tabernacle" is dissolved.

The facts of Christ's Resurrection, and, in the main, the teaching of the Apostles, seem to the writer to conclusively demonstrate that there is no pause or interval between the laying down of the bodily life and the taking up of the "habitation which is from heaven." The Apostle Paul seems to have held that belief in his maturer years (cf. Phil. i. 21-23), but for some time he does not seem to have completely emancipated himself from his old pharisaic beliefs; and through him the belief in the sleep of the soul till the judgment day has crept into the Christian Church.

self and his converts as the only thing worth calling "Life"; and speaks as if those who had that Life were alone truly alive. "We who live," he says: appropriating the word to denote the life of the "inward man," which the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, shining in the face of Jesus Christ, had kindled in their hearts, and using the phrases "our outward man," "our mortal flesh," to describe what the world called "life." And, consistently with the conception of the Christ-life in them as being incommensurable, by reason of its superiority, with the life which the world was living, he speaks of his converts, in Eph. ii. 1, as having been "dead" before God in Christ "quickened" them with the new Life. Elsewhere, too (Col. ii. 20; iii. 1; 2 Cor. v. 14-15), he uses the words "death" and "resurrection" in opposition, to denote the greatness of the change which Christianity had wrought in them; and declares that "if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Cor. v. 17); with which we may compare the assertion of the Apostle John: "We know that we have passed out of death into life" (1 John iii. 14).

Nor have the Apostles any difficulty in defining this new Life of which they and their converts have become possessed; nor in proving that it is of the same nature as the immortal Life of the crucified and risen Jesus.

They point to the evident fact that a new Spirit has entered into them, and transformed their lives. Again and again they refer to the "Spirit" which they have received; often they further define it by its distinctive characteristic as "the Holy Spirit"; sometimes they call it the "Spirit of adoption"; sometimes "the

Spirit of God" (cf. "the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus Christ from the dead," Rom. viii. 11); often "the Spirit of Christ"; and sometimes simply "Christ dwelling in you";—in this way completely identifying it with the immortal Life of their risen Lord. They speak, too, of having "Christ in you the hope of glory" (Col. i. 27); and of the Spirit as "the earnest of our inheritance," the sample and commencement of the eternal Life which they were winning.

They speak also of the "fruit of the Spirit," which, it is unnecessary to point out to the reader, is identical with the graces and virtues which Jesus displayed during His earthly life; and they identify the Spirit which God has given them, with "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. ii. 10, 12, 16).

These are only some of the passages in the Epistles which demonstrate the facts to which we are calling attention—the fact that the Resurrection has convinced the Apostles that the kind of Life which Jesus had manifested was essentially eternal, imperishable, in its nature; and (coupled with the conviction that that Life was possible for them—that indeed they had actually begun to live it) the fact that this conviction had filled them with a "living hope" of winning "the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us" (1 John i. 2).

It cannot fail to strike the reader that there is a consistency and harmony in all this teaching concerning the Resurrection which, *granted that the facts on which it is based are true*, is perfectly intelligible; but which becomes amazing and inexplicable, directly we deny the reality of the facts, and try to explain the teaching

by some other hypothesis. If we deny the fact of the Resurrection, we must attempt to explain the accounts of the reappearances of Jesus which the Gospels contain; the great change in the disciples which undoubtedly took place within a very short time of their Lord's death, and their consistent explanation of the reason of the change—and, further, the undeniable fact that the Apostles based on the Resurrection, and succeeded in persuading their converts to base on it, a mighty hope—a hope which shifted the centre of gravity of their lives from "the things which are seen" to "the things which are not seen"—in a word, the harmonious unfolding of the doctrine of the Resurrection which the Epistles contain; we must attempt to explain all this on some hypothesis of delusion, fixed idea, or prepossession. Many such attempts have been made; that they have completely failed is no mere private opinion of the writer; it is the conviction of the overwhelming majority of those who have attentively studied the facts. The judgment of the ages on this question is that the record of the New Testament is true.

Having thus unfolded what we regard as the significance of the facts of the Resurrection recorded in the Gospels, and having shown how the teaching of the Apostles harmonises with this interpretation, we may proceed to consider the further question of the relation in which the Resurrection stands to the life, and teaching, and purpose of Him whose earthly career had such an unique culmination.

If it can be shown that there was an absolute need

that the work which Jesus set Himself to accomplish—the great purpose for which He lived and died—should be justified and crowned in this unexampled way; if the strong probability—if not the absolute certainty—is that, but for the Resurrection, Christianity would never have taken root in the world, and the Cross of Christ, instead of being the hope and inspiration of the world, would have been its great enigma; then—though, as we have already pointed out, the existence of an imperative need is not of itself sufficient to prove that the reported fact, which satisfied the need, actually occurred—the demonstration of the need cannot fail to strengthen and confirm the conviction which a sober examination of the records forces us to adopt. If the need was imperative, and if—as is not denied by any—the Apostles met it by a firm belief in, and consistent teaching concerning, the Resurrection, we are bound to believe in one of two marvels: the marvel of the fact of the Resurrection; or the marvel of the fact that the followers of Jesus should have *invented*, and consistently believed in and proclaimed such a consummation of their Master's career. And, with all deference to those who have tried to build an argument leading to an opposite conclusion on these lines, we unhesitatingly assert that the more imperative the need of such a justification and consummation of Jesus' life, the *less* likelihood would there have been that the disciples would have tried, or if they did try, would have succeeded in their attempt, to construct out of their own imaginations facts, and a doctrine founded on them, which would completely meet that need, and

be at one and the same time credible, consistent, and infinitely inspiring.

Was the need, then, for the Resurrection imperative? Did the life, and teaching, and death of Jesus absolutely require to be confirmed and justified in this unexampled way, in order to become effective?

The answer could, we think, be given in no uncertain tone by following the line of speculation concerning the probable results which would have followed from Jesus' career, if there had been nothing to record concerning Him subsequent to His death. In that case it is probable that His disciples would long have sorrowfully cherished His memory. It is possible that they might have founded a sect, and have endeavoured to embody in their lives, and to propagate, the truths (so far as they had apprehended them) which He had taught, and so graciously manifested in His life. And thus the story of the wonderful Man whose career in Palestine was cut short by His malicious enemies some forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, might have been handed down through the centuries, and His influence as a great religious teacher might have been felt even till to-day.

This is the barely possible outcome which His efforts as a teacher, and the noble beauty of His Character, might have had.

The probability, however, is that even His memory would not have survived the destruction of the nation, and the downfall of Rome; and it is certain that, if a new civilisation had been able to rear its head from the ashes of the expiring Empire, it would not have

owed its inspiration, far less its existence—as our civilisation undoubtedly does owe both—to Him.

It is, however, unsatisfactory, and it is unnecessary, to speculate on the "might have been." The imperative need for the Resurrection can, we think, be demonstrated by following a very different—and a far sounder—line of argument than this.

It is by considering carefully what was the great Purpose which Jesus set Himself to accomplish in the world—the clear, unwavering Purpose which reveals itself equally in His teaching, His life, and His death—that we can best apprehend the necessity for the Resurrection—can see that by such a consummation, and such a consummation alone, could His Purpose be fulfilled, His Life be demonstrated to be the true and eternal Life, and He Himself be revealed as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world.

Jesus' Purpose, or Mission, or Aim—it matters not which term we make use of so long as we make it connote what He set Himself to accomplish in and for the world—can be regarded from several different points of view, and can consequently be expressed in several different ways. He Himself spoke of it on different occasions under one or other of its various aspects; as for instance, when He spoke of Himself as having come to fulfil the law and the prophets (Matt. v. 17); or when He told His disciples: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me and to accomplish His work" (John iv. 34); or again when, as He so frequently did, He set Himself forth as the founder of a kingdom; or when, in answer to Pilate's question: "Art thou a king?" He defined at one and

the same time, the nature of His kingship, and the aim of His life: "To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." (John xviii. 57.)

The aspects of His mission which have naturally very largely claimed the attention of His followers—those namely which have earned for Him the titles "Saviour" and "Redeemer,"—it was impossible for Him to do more than hint at as long as the great redemptive act of His life remained unaccomplished. But hints concerning these aspects of it are plainly thrown out in answer to Zacchæus: "To-day is salvation come to this house—for the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke xix. 9-10); in the parable of the lost sheep (Luke xv. 3-7); and in many other passages; not the least significant of which is His reply to the Jews who believed on Him: "If ye abide in my word then are ye truly my disciples, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." "Everyone that committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin." "If the Son shall make you free ye shall be free indeed" (John viii. vv. 31, 34, 36); in which the double aspect of His redemptive work, as accomplishing salvation *from* the servitude of sin, and salvation *to* the freedom of the truth, is clearly brought out.

This latter aspect of His work has often been greatly overlooked by those who have recognised and proclaimed Him as the Saviour and the Redeemer. And yet it can hardly be denied that it is the most important of all, and the one on which both He and His Apostles laid the greatest stress. The aspects of His

mission and aim in which He can be regarded as the Saviour and Redeemer of men from the slavery, and guilt, and ignorance, and "death" of sin, are necessarily subsidiary to those in which He can be regarded as the Bestower of liberty, the Uniter of man with God, the Revealer of the truth, and the Life-giver. If we want to define His Purpose in the broadest and most comprehensive terms, we must use those which clearly define the goal—the terminus *ad quem*—not those which simply define how He overcame the difficulties which lay in the path to that goal. Consequently, unless we read into the terms "Saviour" and "Redeemer" a meaning which is not generally understood—unless we connect them, not with the past, but with the future, not with what man has been, but with what man may be—they do not (however approximately they may express one very important aspect of His work) satisfactorily define His great purpose and aim. That aim was wider and deeper than salvation or redemption from the guilt and misery of sin—wider and deeper than that of reinstating the race in the position which it might have occupied but for the entrance of sin into the world. In Jesus' conception the golden age of the world did not lie in the past. He did not dream of restoring man to a lost Eden, but of enrolling Him as a member of a Kingdom which was yet to come. His Purpose was not simply to clear away the hindrances which prevented the race from realising its highest ideal of life and happiness; but to set before it, and to lead it to, a new ideal of life and blessedness.

Hence, in defining His Aim or Purpose, there is

only one word which is comprehensive enough to fully express it, and that is the word "life." This is the word which both He and His Apostles most often made use of; either with or without the qualifying word "eternal," which defined the character and quality of the life which He came to impart.

"I came that men may have life, and that they may have it abundantly," He said on one occasion (John x. 10). "I am the life," He told His disciples at the Last Supper; and it is evident, not only from the numerous references which we find in the Gospels,* but also from the fact that in the Epistles "life," or "eternal life," is the word most frequently used to denote "the gift of God through Jesus Christ (both the aim and the result of His ministry):—it is evident, we say, that He and His apostles regarded this term as the most appropriate one by which to denote the grand Purpose which He undertook to accomplish in the world.

It was then, the Purpose and Mission of Jesus to give men life—eternal life. What is eternal life? How is it to be distinguished from that which we commonly denominate "life"?

The answer is clearly given in the New Testament; given both in the teaching and in the life of Jesus, and also in the teaching and lives of His followers. It is—to use the language of the Apostle Paul—that

* Cf. Matt. xviii. 8, "It is better to enter into life halt." Matt. xix. 16, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Matt. xxv. 46, "The righteous shall go into life eternal." Mark x. 30, "Shall receive . . . in the world to come eternal life;" and especially in the Fourth Gospel: iii. 15-36; iv. 36; v. 29-40; vi. 33-54; viii. 12; x. 28; xi. 25; xii. 25; xviii 2.

which results from a "looking at the things which are not seen"—eternal things;—while life, in the ordinary sense, is that which results from a looking at things which are seen (which from their very nature are temporal). It is, to use Herbert Spencer's definition, "correspondence with" a spiritual "environment." It is that which results from the exercise of the faculties of the "inward man"—faith, hope, obedience, love (which we cannot better define than as "the spirit") in vital relationship with the God who is Spirit. It is to live, and act, and feel, and think, as a son, in the presence of, and in fellowship with, the eternal Father.

There is no need to refer to the numerous passages, both in the Gospels and Epistles, which could be quoted in support of this definition of the life in possession of which it was the aim of Jesus to place mankind; because, after all, the great definition has been given to us, not in words, but in "the loveliness of perfect deeds." Jesus' life is the only perfect expression of "eternal life" to which we can point. "In Him was life"; "the life—the eternal life—was manifested in Him"; no elaborateness of definition will enable us to transcend these simple yet comprehensive statements.

We have in the previous chapters dwelt sufficiently on the uniqueness of that life; and it will only be necessary, for our present purpose, to call attention to two or three of its broad features, which serve to distinguish it from anything which the world had seen before.

The most distinctive feature of the life of Jesus is the

personal relationship between Himself and God, on which it is based, and of which it is the outcome. He lived in continual fellowship with "the Father." Love and loyalty to the Father were the keynotes to which His life's music was pitched; His meat and drink was to do the will of the Father; all His actions, and all His words, harmonised with that filial relationship in which He stood to the living, holy Being whom He called "my Father and your Father, my God and your God."

Now the life which He manifested, and which resulted from this personal relationship with, and loyalty to, God, differed from any life which had been lived previously by holy and God-fearing men, not merely in that it was wholly loyal and true to the relationship in which He conceived Himself to be standing to God, and to the ideal of Character which He attributed to God, but in that the relationship itself far surpassed in clearness and intimacy anything to which man had previously attained; and that the ideal which He held of God's Nature and Character transcended—while at the same time it fulfilled—all previous conceptions of the truth. No son of man before Him had lived the perfect life of a Son of God in the world; not simply because sin had marred the best efforts of men to serve and obey God, but also because the full truth concerning the Nature and Character of God had not been realised, and consequently the full possibilities of fellowship with God which man possessed could not be developed. We are justified, therefore, in asserting that the life of loyalty and obedience to His Father—God—(the filial life) which Jesus lived (the

life of what we have just defined as "the spirit"—the spirit which impressed itself on, and expressed itself in, every word He spoke, and every deed He did) was, both in kind and in degree, new to the world. The world's most devout and religious men—even the noblest and most God-fearing of the Hebrew race—had never dreamed of pitching life to such a keynote as that; had never—because their knowledge of God was not, as we have pointed out, sufficiently full and clear—dared to set before themselves the life of trust, and obedience, and communion with God as the one true, and perfect, and satisfying life, *in and for itself*, and apart altogether from the natural consequences which the living of it might involve.

And, of course, to the vast majority of men, "dead in trespasses and sins," the manifestation of life which Jesus gave was bound to appear an altogether new and undreamt-of thing—a revelation of the possibilities of life so new and wonderful—so entirely different from anything which had come under their notice, or even entered their thoughts before, that, when they realised its significance, they would feel compelled to tax the capacities of language to the uttermost, in order to adequately express the difference between it and what they had previously denominated "life."

Such a shifting of the centre of gravity of life as is involved in living in and for "the things not seen," instead of in and for "the things seen,"—such a revolution as is involved in making life pivot on faith in and love to the invisible Father, and on finding in the doing of His will, and in the spiritual joy and

blessedness which results from loyalty to Him and fellowship with Him, the supremely satisfying end of existence—could only be adequately described by drawing the strongest possible contrast between it and the kind of life which the majority of men had previously lived, and were still living.

And this is what we find the Apostle Paul continually doing—either describing the condition in which his converts had been living previous to their conversion, as a state of "death," or appropriating the word "life" to denominate exclusively that new relationship with God to which they had attained through faith in Jesus.*

The grand Purpose or Aim of Jesus was then, we conclude, to lift mankind up to, and to enable it to live, this new kind of life. He lived, and He died, to demonstrate the fact that man can live the life of a son, in fellowship with the Eternal Father—that it is his high privilege and destiny to share in the life of God—and that all living which is not conducted on these lines is profitless and vain: it shall not profit a man to gain the whole world, if he miss that life.

And this brings us to the point to set forth which we have followed this line of thought concerning the Purpose of Jesus.

There is no doubt that Jesus taught that this filial life which He proclaimed, and which He lived, was the best and highest kind of life for man to live; for this reason, amongst others—perhaps we should not be going too far in saying, for this reason *before* all others

* Cf. Eph. ii. 1-5. 2 Cor. iv. 10-11.

—because it is intrinsically eternal in its nature. The life which is lived in relation with "things seen" is necessarily—because these are transitory, and subject to change and decay—an unstable and unenduring life. Moth and rust corrupt, and thieves break through and steal earthly treasures; death snatches the rich man from all that he has gathered and made his home in, at the moment when he is planning new developments. Life can find no anchorage among the things of time and sense: "the world passeth away, and the lust thereof." But the things which are not seen are eternal. Faith, hope, and love abide, because God abides. To know God is to have eternal life, Jesus declared. "If a man keep my word, he shall never taste of death" (John viii. 52); and again, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish" (x. 27-28).

But, just as it required more than the spoken word and the manifested life, to fully reveal to the world and fully convince the world of the truth concerning the Father; just as it was necessary for Jesus to die in order to bring home to the minds and hearts of sinful men the full truth, which it was His Purpose to reveal; so, we can unhesitatingly say, it was necessary for Him to demonstrate the eternal nature of the Life which He manifested, by more than "closest words," if mankind was to be inspired to begin to walk in His footsteps.

If Jesus' life had ended in the failure and ignominy of the Cross, its charm and beauty would doubtless still have appealed powerfully to all lovers

of nobility and goodness; and the memory of His purity and graciousness, as well as some echo of His lofty teaching concerning God and life, would probably have been preserved in the minds of some of His followers, and, possibly, would have been handed down through the ages, and would have constituted an ideal which devout religious souls would have long recognised and accepted.

But, even to the minds of the most spiritually-minded, it would, in that case, only have appealed because of its intrinsic nobility and excellence; not because it was justified by results. Those who came under His attractive influence would have felt compelled to accept His teaching, and to admire and reverence His life, because these satisfied their spiritual instincts, and claimed their hearts' reverence and admiration—with that supreme claim which truth and beauty always make. But the influence which His teaching and life exerted over them would have failed to rouse Hope in their souls—that indispensable element in salvation (Rom. viii. 24); and they would have followed Him blindly, and well-nigh despairingly. For, in spite of those allusions which we find Him making to His joy, and His peace, and in spite of the serenity which His soul habitually enjoyed, the lesson which His life would have taught would not have been that the life which He lived was obviously the best and truest life for man—satisfying and sufficient in and for itself. The impression that He was a man of sorrows, despised and rejected of men, would have been stronger than the conviction that His life brought Him

satisfying blessedness. And the Cross would not—could not—have taught the lesson which it teaches now—now that it is seen in the light of the Resurrection—the lesson that the filial life can, and ought to be, lived—even if it involves the loss of everything, even life itself—because it is certain of ultimate justification and glorification. Rather the Cross of Jesus would have pointed in that case, to the hopeless conclusion that by being consistently and entirely true to the noblest beliefs, and by living wholly in and for the highest moral and spiritual instincts of his nature, a man is certain to lose the world, and to be rejected and hated by the vast majority of his fellows, without being certain of finding, if he thus continues true till death, even *an opportunity of continuing* that life; to say nothing of an opportunity for demonstrating on the other side of the gates of death, that he has been justified in living it. This, it seems probable, would have been the effect produced in the noblest minds by the life and teaching of Jesus, if His life had ended on the Cross.

On the bulk of mankind, the impression would have been much more unfavourable. It would have been impossible to convince men sunk in sin and selfishness that such a life was the true life for them to live. That such a life as Jesus lived should have ended *so*, would have proved to them nothing but the obvious futility of the attempt to live above the world. "*Cui bono?*" they would have asked: "He lost the world; what did He gain? And what shall we gain by walking in His footsteps? He has passed into the darkness, and we

know no more about Him than we do about any of those who are dead. He *may* have reaped a rich harvest of life from the fields of death; He *may* have found compensation for all that He renounced and all that He suffered here; but we cannot tell; all is dark."

The Resurrection renders all such objections impossible. It *proves* that the Life which Jesus Christ manifested is eternal, imperishable; that death glorifies it, gives it room to expand into unimaginable fulness and power. It proves that even if the living of that Life involves the loss of all worldly things—even the loss of life itself—it is still the right and the best Life to live; because "sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; sown in weakness, it is raised in power; sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body"; having in it "the power of an endless life."

It is not, we are convinced, an overstatement of the facts, to assign this supreme importance to the Resurrection as the consummation of Jesus' Purpose to lift mankind up to the enjoyment of the eternal Life. Nothing but such a convincing demonstration as this of the eternal nature, and of the certain and glorious development of that Life which He manifested in the world, would have inspired men to begin to live it. To accomplish such a tremendous revolution in the world as He set Himself to accomplish (the shifting of the centre of gravity of man's life from the things which are seen to the things which are not seen—the inducing of weak and sinful man to love God and spiritual things instead of self and material things) it was absolutely necessary to demonstrate, not merely the in-

trinsic nobility, but also the incomparable superiority of that new Life—to prove that it was *Life*, and had in it power to vindicate its superiority (alike by its inherent vitality and by its results), as this could not be demonstrated through the experiences and in the cycle of an earthly existence.

This the Resurrection did; and we are bold to declare that nothing but the return of Him who lived that perfect, filial Life, after the tragic close of His earthly career, in a glorified body, and with evidences of possessing an expanded life, could have completed His purpose, and ensured its success.

This is the consistent view which the Apostles took of the Resurrection—their own explanation of the importance which they attach to it. It is the main point of the first portion of the Apostle Paul's great argument in 1 Cor. xv.: "If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith is also vain." "If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable"; because we sacrifice this world and this life without any hope of gaining another; because "we are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake," without any solid ground for hope that "the life of Jesus," which we are trying to develop in our "mortal flesh," will be "raised up."*

The same thought also appears in the Apostle's Second Epistle to Timothy: "Faithful is the saying, For if we die with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we endure we shall also reign with Him."

It is the Resurrection, the Apostle writes, in Rom. i.

* See 2 Cor. iv. 14.

4, which declares Jesus Christ "with power" to be the Son of God. It is the Resurrection, Peter declares (1 Pet. i. 3), which "begat us again unto a living hope." But there is no need to multiply references. No careful reader of the New Testament Epistles can fail to note that they are saturated with the conviction, that the justification of the message which the writers have delivered, and the demonstration of the superiority of the life which they call upon their converts to live—as well as the reasonableness of the attempt to win it, in spite of the "daily dying" which it involves:—that all this is to be found in the fact that God raised the Lord Jesus from the dead; in that fact, and in that alone.

It cannot be denied that if that event, which with evident and entire conviction they believed to have taken place, and made the pivot of all their teaching and all their hope, did really occur, they were justified in teaching and in hoping as they did. But, if they laboured under a delusion on this cardinal point—alas! for them, and alas! for us.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### The Spiritual Consciousness of Jesus.

We pointed out in our First Chapter, when commenting on the reply which Jesus gave to His parents, that even at the age of twelve He gave evidence of possessing a consciousness the depths of which are far beyond our fathoming. Not only did He call God "Father," but He called Him "My Father,"—an expression which not only indicates that He already had a knowledge of, and a communion with, God, marvellously full and clear, but which seems to assume and imply a relationship with the Eternal such as no other son of man has dared to claim. If we are not absolutely obliged to recognise that such language implies a consciousness, and a sense of relationship with God differing *in kind* from that which any other human being has given evidence of possessing, we at any rate must admit that, *in degree*, it differs to an extent which is immeasurable. If we are not forced to conceive of the union and communion with God which is implied in it as resting on such a basis of equality as no human being could, without the most outrageous presumption, postulate in his relations with his Maker, we *are* forced to conceive of it as an union and communion entirely without parallel in the world's history; an absolutely unique phenomenon

among the almost infinitely varied manifestations of human consciousness.

We do not propose in this chapter to make any attempt to fathom a mystery which we have already admitted to be unfathomable. We shall simply endeavour to unfold those aspects of this unique spiritual consciousness of Jesus of which we subsequently get glimpses in the Gospels. With all reverence, let us endeavour to ascertain from the language which He made use of during His public ministry, and from such of His actions as throw light on the subject, what relations with God He gave evidence of habitually sustaining in His riper manhood, Who at twelve called Him "My Father"; let us endeavour to realise how closely this Son of Man, on this, the deepest side of His nature, felt Himself to be united to the Eternal, when boyhood and youth had passed, and the burden and heat of the day had to be borne.

The Gospels do not fail us when we attentively study them with a view to answering this question. They record both words and actions of Jesus which make it abundantly plain that we have not over-estimated the significance of the language He made use of in His reply to His parents when a boy. They prove that that reply was not merely the expression of boyish enthusiasm, of youthful presumption, or of imperfect self-knowledge; but of a fundamental consciousness, which He kept unimpaired through the long discipline of the eighteen years of silence, and continually showed Himself to possess amidst the toil, and care, and sorrow of His manhood. They show that here too "The child is

father of the man"; most marvellously do they substantiate and confirm the evidence with which the solitary glimpse of His boyhood furnishes us, concerning this amazing feature of His personality.

The Fourth Gospel is richest in direct statements of our Lord on this subject; but let no one suppose that it is the Fourth Gospel alone which furnishes us with evidence that He possessed such a consciousness. The Synoptic Gospels *imply* that He possessed it—imply it so plainly and so unmistakably that the explicit statements recorded in the Fourth Gospel are, so far as proof of the fact is concerned, superfluous. The pervading presence of the daylight is no more infallible proof of the existence of the orb of day, than are the words and deeds of Jesus as recorded by the Synoptists, of the existence in Him of this abiding consciousness of a close, personal, unexampled fellowship and relationship with God.

On this point the evidence with which His recorded teaching furnishes us is, of itself, conclusive.

In the first place, "He taught as one having authority"—as one who was intimately acquainted with the Mind and Heart of God. He did not hesitate to abrogate, or to supplement the divinely instituted laws and maxims of the old dispensation by a "verily, verily, *I* say unto you"—a phrase constantly on His lips, and one which at least implies that He held Himself to have a clearer knowledge of the Divine Will, and a firmer grasp of divine truth than any of the inspired lawgivers or prophets who had preceded Him.

Moreover, He did not hesitate to unfold to His hearers the Character of God in language which is not

only clear and decisive, and which expresses thoughts and truths concerning Him, if not altogether new, yet such as the world's noblest and best had only imperfectly groped after, and falteringly expressed before; but thoughts and truths which could only come from the lips of One who felt Himself to be in close and intimate spiritual communion with God. Spiritual knowledge (that is, knowledge of the spiritual nature of God) such as His—so clear and full, so original, so untrammelled by the grooves in which the thought and life of His nation had hitherto moved—can only be explained as the outcome of direct spiritual life. To spiritual life (which necessarily involves communion with the God who is Spirit) in the souls of men we are bound to trace ultimately all the rills and streams of truth, and light, and knowledge of divine things which perennially flow to us from the pages of the Old Testament. Inspiration, as has been frequently pointed out, is not in the Book, but in the men who wrote it. And in proportion as the quality and volume of any such stream of truth is superior, to that extent are we bound to postulate as its source a fuller and deeper spiritual life in the man from whom it originates. No one will deny that in the case of Jesus we have no mere rill or stream, but a mighty river—nay, rather—an ocean tide, of light, and truth, and knowledge of divine things, which *fulfilled* the law and the prophets, as the tide fills to the full every creek and estuary of the land; a tide in which rill, and stream, and river lose themselves, but only because they have gone full circle, and found that which is both their source and their home.

And so, we are not only justified in inferring, but are bound to infer, that the source and origin of that wonderful teaching which the Synoptists record is the spiritual life which Jesus possessed; that His teaching is the direct outcome of His fellowship and communion with God—a fellowship and communion, closer and fuller than that to which we trace the inspired utterances of other saints and seers, in proportion as the truth which He unfolds is fuller and clearer than that which they impart. And when we find that, in authoritative tones, Jesus, in that teaching, sets forth God as the merciful, magnanimous, and loving Father, with a clearness and attractiveness which has no parallel, and which for eighteen centuries has been deemed by the world's saintliest and best a satisfying expression of the truth; and then, boldly postulating the capacity for Divine Sonship in man, sets before men, as the ideal of duty and obligation, nothing less than the imitation of the Father—the attaining to His perfection (and, be it noted in passing: the very fact that the perfection of the Father is set forth by Jesus as the mark to be aimed at, implies a ***knowledge***, on His part, of that perfection), how are we to express the difference between His knowledge and His teaching, and the knowledge and teaching of those who were His forerunners, except in such language as Scripture makes use of? The light which came from them came in divers portions and divers manners; *He* shines as the effulgence of God's glory; He stands forth as the image of His substance. How are we to express the difference between the various degrees of spiritual

life which they possessed, and that which tabernacled in Him, except by saying: they were servants; He was a Son; they had the Spirit in measure; in Him it existed in immeasurable fulness?

But the fact that Jesus in His ripe manhood retained that unexampled consciousness of communion and fellowship with God which we have found Him to possess in childhood, can be substantiated by other proofs, with which the pages of the Synoptists furnish us, besides those which are to be drawn from the tone and quality of His teaching.

We have pointed out the significant fact that, in His reply to His parents, He does not say "our Father," but "my Father"; and have stated what inferences are to be drawn from His use of such phraseology. To some readers they may have seemed inferences too large and sweeping to pivot on a single phrase. Let us consider, then, the language which He makes use of when speaking of God to His friends, or to the multitude, during His public ministry.

Surely it cannot be a mere coincidence—surely it is most significant to find that, with one exception, the phrase "our Father" is never recorded to have been used by Him. Glancing through the Synoptic Gospels we find that (including parallel passages) the phrase "your Father" is used twenty-two times by Jesus; the phrase "my Father" twenty times; "the Father" occurs five times; "Father," "O Father," or "Abba Father" nine times; "His Father" (referring to the Son of Man) twice; and "their Father" (referring to the righteous) once. The one exception occurs in the Lord's Prayer, as recorded by Matthew. (Matt. vi. 9.)

"After this manner, therefore, pray ye; Our Father which art in heaven."*

It is obvious that this exception has no weight so far as the point we are considering is concerned. It would only have had weight if He had said, "After this manner let *us* pray." As it is, it only confirms the startling fact that not once does Jesus, in the language recorded by the Synoptists, bracket Himself with His audience when speaking of God.

Surely, we repeat, this cannot be a mere coincidence. Surely we are justified in assuming that His language faithfully mirrored His thought and feeling, and that He never used the phrase "our Father" because He was convinced that He sustained a communion and fellowship with God which His hearers did not share; because He felt that He knew the Father with a fulness of knowledge which isolated Him from the rest of men, and which made it impossible for Him to assume that He and they stood on a common basis of relationship to God. Surely the fact that the language which we find Him using, when speaking of God, in His ripe manhood, is entirely in harmony with the startling language which He is recorded to have used in His boyhood, justifies the inferences which we have drawn; compels us to assume that both in boyhood and in manhood Jesus was conscious of a fellowship and communion with God absolutely unexampled —unique, an oneness with Him of Mind, and Heart,

* In the parallel passage in Luke (xi. 2), the Revisers do not consider that the words "Our———which art in Heaven," have sufficient MS. authority, and simply put "Father" in the text.

and Spirit, which amply justifies His use of such a phrase as "the Son of Man," or even "the Son,"* and which can only be adequately expressed in human language by according Him the title of "the Son of God."

Nor do we find any inconsistency—anything out of harmony with such an assumption—when we turn from His words to His actions, and study the portrait of the Living Man with which the Synoptists furnish us. Deeds speak louder than words; the conclusions we have drawn from the language which He employed, could not be maintained if we found that His actions in any way failed to justify His implied claim—if His Character exhibited traits unworthy of one who deemed Himself peculiarly a Son of the Father.

But the Character of the Man as sketched by the Evangelists is consistent throughout. Jesus was no recluse, no ascetic; He "came eating and drinking." We find Him in all sorts of society; we see Him in most of the relationships which men and women sustain to one another: as son, brother, friend; as scholar and as teacher, as host and as guest; with friends and with foes; in popularity and in unpopularity; at work and at rest; free, and in bonds. And everywhere and always He is the same true, pure, faithful, fearless, Godlike Man, expressing His Spirit's sweetness, and strength, and light in

"The loveliness of perfect deeds;"

unfailingly giving evidence of the reality and the closeness of His relations with the sources of Spiritual

* *Vide* Matt. xi. 27, Matt. xxiv. 36, Luke x. 22, Mark xiii. 32.

Power and Life; ever manifesting that right, and holy, and willing spirit (cf. Ps. li.) for which we should look in a Son, beloved of the Father.

To sketch more in detail the portrait of Jesus as presented to us by the Synoptists, in order to show how completely it harmonises with—and indeed can only be accounted for by—the presence in Him of such a consciousness of fellowship and oneness with God as (we have seen) the tone and quality of His teaching, and the language He uses when speaking of the Father, justifies us in assuming, would be beyond the scope of this chapter.

But before we leave this portion of our subject, we may call attention to two striking features in that portrait, which add not a little to the weight of evidence that He felt and knew Himself to be a Son of God, in such an exceptional sense, and to such an exceptional degree, as we have maintained.

We refer to the fact that He is represented by the Evangelists both as *working miracles* and *forgiving sins;* on one occasion (Mark ii. 5-11, Luke v. 20-24) as exercising the former power in order to show that He was entitled to exercise the latter.

Many attempts have been made to eliminate the miraculous element from the Gospel narratives, but no impartial critic can maintain that they have been successful. It is possible, and even probable, that the Evangelists do not always report what occurred with strict accuracy. It is certain that the works of healing which Jesus wrought seemed to them miraculous, whereas we should deem many of them perfectly explicable on "natural" grounds. Nevertheless,

after making all reasonable concessions, and allowing the most liberal discount on these grounds, a very large miraculous element remains in the Gospel narratives. It is, moreover, so closely interwoven with the rest of the narrative, and so intimately associated with the Character of the Man, that it cannot be eliminated, without disintegrating the one, and emasculating the other. If we are to accept the Gospel records of the life of Jesus as, even in the main, worthy of trust, we are compelled to believe that He possessed, and exercised not infrequently, an unexampled power over disease, and the forces of the natural world, and could even compel death to obey His life-giving word.

And this is a feature which we should expect to find in the life of One who held such close relations with the Source of all Power. Any man who was conscious of such a fellowship and oneness with God as Jesus (we are endeavouring to show) possessed, could not help working miracles, or what—to those less in touch with spiritual things, and with less intimate knowledge of that "One God, one law, one element," which pervades the universe—seemed to be such. Such an one would naturally, inevitably perform many deeds inexplicable and marvellous in the eyes of ordinary men. To Him they would seem—they did seem—almost matters of course. He never placed a high value on them; never rated them higher than spiritual things; and one of the most remarkable features of the Gospel narratives is the sobriety, and self-restraint, and the absence of all ostentation, which characterises His use of this remarkable power.

The point we wish to lay emphasis on, however, is this; that if we do not admit that Jesus was, in an unique degree, united to God by the bonds of spiritual sympathy and communion, the miraculous element in the Gospel narratives offers insuperable difficulties to any one attempting to read and understand His Character and life. But, granting that unique spiritual bond, the difficulties vanish. We may not be able to "explain" His miracles, but we can believe that in recording them the Evangelists are recording facts, no less worthy of credence than those in which He is presented to us as eating, and drinking, and walking, and teaching, and sleeping. For we should *expect* an element of the inexplicable in the records of the life of One whose Character, and teaching, and influence on the world are so unexampled. We should expect such a Godlike Son of Man to be able to exercise an altogether unprecedented influence and control over the forces of nature. Do not our modern inventions and contrivances seem miraculous to the savage? And what is the distance which separates us from the savage compared with that which separates us from the one Man who has fulfilled the prophecy, and realised the ideal of manhood of the Hebrew poet?

"Thou hast made Him but little lower than God,
And crownest Him with glory and honour;
Thou madest Him to have dominion over the works of thy hands;
Thou hast put all things under His feet."

And the same may be said, with even more force, of the other striking fact recorded by the Evangelists, to

which we have alluded—the fact that Jesus exercised the power of forgiving sin.

"Why doth this man thus speak? He blasphemeth, who can forgive sins but one, even God?" said certain of the scribes, on hearing Jesus say to the man sick of the palsy, "Son, thy sins are forgiven." And they were right, if Jesus did not possess in an unique degree the consciousness of fellowship with God—if He did not feel and know Himself to be a Son of God, so truly and fully that He could speak for His Father even in such a matter as the forgiveness of sin.

In view of the fact that Jesus boldly exercised this power, it is absolutely necessary to assume that He was conscious of a spiritual bond uniting Him to God so closely as to enable Him to read His Mind and Heart with perfect clearness, and to authoritatively express His Spirit:—unless we hold Him guilty of an outrageous presumption, or deem Him the victim of a fatal self-deception. But neither of these alternatives will harmonise with the rest of His Character as presented to us by the Evangelists; nor can any thoughtful reader deem them appropriate interpretations of the spirit He displayed on the occasions when He exercised this power. There is no trace of either presumption or self-deception in His use of this awful authority. On the contrary, on each of the three occasions on which He is recorded to have forgiven sin, His action finds ample justification in the attitude and disposition of those whose sin He pronounced forgiven. However unjustifiable it might seem to men steeped in the prejudices of Judaism, no one who has apprehended—or been in even the smallest degree in-

fluenced by—the spirit of large-hearted charity, and profound yet perfectly balanced sympathy and pity displayed by this Son of Man; no one who has observed how these traits of His Character are combined with—and harmonise with—a spotless purity, and an uncompromising hostility to sin in every form; and no one who has accepted His presentation of the Character of God, can fail to admit that in responding to the faith of the man sick of the palsy, to the contrition and love of the Magdalene, and to the penitence of the dying thief, He acted rightly; He only expressed the Mind and Spirit of His Father.

But *we*, even when most uplifted by His Spirit, and when our realisation of the pity and mercy of God is most profound, can only dare to say to the penitent sinner, "God forgives you." How intimate must His relation to God have been who presumed authoritatively to declare: "Thy sins are forgiven thee"; "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven"; "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise"!

It must be evident to all readers that it is only by accepting the hypothesis which we have already seen to be supported by such ample proofs—the hypothesis that in Jesus we are brought face to face with a consciousness and a personality absolutely unique, a type of spiritual life altogether *sui generis*—that we can calmly contemplate the fact that He boldly took upon Himself to pronounce the sins of men forgiven. If we cannot go so far as to say, in this case, what we have said concerning His exercise of miraculous power—that we should expect such an unique Man to

display such power (and we cannot say that simply because we have had no example in human history of a man whose knowledge of God has been full and clear enough, and his consciousness of fellowship with God intense enough to enable him to exercise this power in such a way as to permit of such an expectation; though the tone of some of the Hebrew prophets might lead us to expect much in this direction), yet we can at least say this: that the fact that He is recorded by the Synoptists to have exercised this power, comes as no shock to us, when we realise with what kind of a Spirit, and what intensity of God-consciousness we are obliged, on other grounds, to credit Him. This feature in the marvellous story of His life does not clash with the rest; rather it takes its place as one more link in the chain of evidence that here we have a Son of Man whom we can only adequately denominate by calling Him "the Son of God."

Before we leave this portion of our subject it will be well to note another fact recorded by the Evangelists, which is both of interest and importance in relation to the spiritual consciousness which Jesus possessed. We allude to the fact that He is represented on several occasions as *praying*. There can be no doubt indeed, that prayer with Him was habitual—that He felt it to be an indispensable link in the chain which united Him to God.

"In the morning, a great while before day, He rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed." (Mark i. 35.) "And it came to pass in those days, that He went into the mountain to pray,

and He continued all night in prayer to God." (Luke vi. 12.) "And after He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into the mountain apart to pray." (Matt. xiv. 23, Mark vi. 46.)

These passages, as well as several others in which He is recorded to have prayed (notably the accounts of His agony in the garden) show that however full and clear His knowledge of God, and His consciousness of fellowship with Him may have been, Jesus' spiritual union with the Father did not enable Him to dispense with that method of communication with Him which humanity has ever found to be the most effective, and the most indispensable. It is important to realise this fact, in all its significance, in trying to apprehend this deepest and most mysterious side of His nature which we are contemplating. For it enables us to see how completely He was a man, and was bound by the conditions, and limited by the limitations, which circumscribe human nature—even in this direction, where His humanity

> "touches the Divine,
> By some fine link intangible to us
> Upon that side of mortal consciousness
> That looks towards death."

Had we not the distinct and repeated record of the fact, we might have been inclined to think that One who habitually spoke and acted on such an immeasurably higher level of knowledge of divine things, and consciousness of divine communion, than has been attained by any other son of man, would have been able to adopt some more direct and intimate method of communication with the God who is Spirit—some

such method, for instance, as the mystic has thought he could employ—which would have rendered intercourse through the medium of spoken words superfluous.

But it was not so. Again and again we find Him resorting to prayer in order to refresh His Spirit, and to renew His grasp of the Divine Hand; even here, where we should most expect to find Him differing from the rest of humanity, we find Him united to us by the bonds of a common need; in this respect, too, He shows Himself a Son of Man—none the less so that, by means of this method which we all adopt, He was able to sustain Himself at such an unexampled height of communion and fellowship with the Father as entitles Him to be named the Son of God.

Having now briefly reviewed the evidence with which the Synoptic Gospels furnish us concerning the unique spiritual consciousness of Jesus, we may proceed to consider the view of His Person and Nature which is presented to us in the Fourth Gospel.

It will hardly be denied that the conclusions to which we have been led by our previous inquiry, bring us to a point of view of the Person of Jesus which, if it does not coincide with that which we find in the Fourth Gospel, predisposes us to sympathise with it to a large extent.

We have found the Synoptic Gospels so full of evidence that Jesus was conscious of sustaining a spiritual relationship with God, absolutely unexampled and unfathomable, that, as we have said, so far as proof of the fact is concerned, the explicit statements He is

reported in the Fourth Gospel to have made on this subject are superfluous.

The Synoptic Gospels, moreover, not only furnish us with a large amount of cumulative evidence on this point, but they are not wanting in direct proof that Jesus at times gave expression to His consciousness of fellowship with the Father, in language which shows how amazingly deep and full that consciousness must have been; language, moreover, which is strikingly in harmony with that which the Fourth Gospel on several occasions reports Him to have used, and which contains a claim to divine Sonship as stupendous as any which we find in that Gospel. (Cf. Matt. xi. 27, Luke x. 22.)

Nevertheless it cannot be denied that the Fourth Gospel presents problems of very great difficulty; and inasmuch as, at the present time, it cannot be said that these problems have been finally solved, we can hardly make use of the evidence with which it furnishes us concerning the spiritual consciousness of Jesus with the same confidence as we can use that of the Synoptic Gospels.

Let us briefly consider the difficulties which stand in the way of an unqualified acceptance of its report.

In the first place the questions: "Who was its author?" and "What was the probable date at which it was written?" are still open ones. Critical opinion is hopelessly divided on these points; and though it is becoming clear that the Gospel must be assigned to a much earlier date than the extreme school of critics until very recently contended for, it cannot yet be proved to belong to the first century; nor can it be said that

the arguments in favour of the Johannine authorship are overwhelmingly strong.

But, even if the questions concerning date and authorship were finally settled, the difficulty standing in the way of an unqualified acceptance of the portrait of Jesus sketched by the author of this Gospel would be by no means altogether removed.

The difficulties present themselves in this form. The Gospel is avowedly written from an altogether different standpoint from that assumed by the Synoptists. "The Fourth Gospel is distinguished from the other three in that it is shaped with a conscious design to illustrate and establish an assumed conclusion."*

"These have been written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in his name." (John xx. 31.)

Moreover, the whole Gospel is pitched to the key-note which is struck in the prologue, *i.e.*, to the conception of the Person of Jesus embodied in the doctrine of the Logos which is there unfolded. "It is undoubtedly true that as we read St. John's Gospel in the light of the prologue, we transfer the full teaching which that contains into all the later parts of the narrative, and that they derive their complete meaning from it."†

The full teaching which that contains is the teaching that Jesus is the Son of God, in the sense of being the incarnate Logos, who was in the beginning with God, and was God.

This remark applies more particularly to the dis-

* Westcott: "Gospel according to St. John," Introduction, p. xli.

† *Ibid.*, lix.

courses of Jesus which the author of the Fourth Gospel records. "In the discourses of St. John—the Lord after the beginning of His public ministry turns the thoughts of His hearers in each case to Himself, as the one centre of hope."*

Now it is generally admitted that these discourses cannot be accepted as verbatim reports of the utterances of Jesus. "It is undeniable that the discourses of the Lord which are peculiar to St. John's Gospel, are for the most part, very brief summaries of elaborate discussions and expositions in relation to central topics of faith. It is wholly out of the question that they can be literal reports of what was said. From the necessities of the case the Evangelist has condensed his narrative. He has not given, and he could not have given, consistently with the nature of this work, all the words which were actually spoken; and this being so, it follows that he cannot have given the exact words, or only the words which were spoken. Compression involves adaptation of phraseology. And when we once realise the inevitable conditions of condensation, we find ourselves constrained to trust (in this case as in others) to the insight and power of him who selects, arranges, emphasises words which are, in his judgment, best suited to convey the proportionate impression of discourses which he apprehends in their totality."†

Now the writer of the Fourth Gospel tells us that he beheld the glory of Jesus (*i.e.*, "the word become

* Westcott: "Gospel according to St. John," Introduction, p. lix.

† *Ibid.*, lvii.

flesh") and it was "glory as of an only begotten from a father." (R. V. mar.)

That is to say, the conviction to which he had been led by his association with Jesus was that He was, in an absolutely unique sense, the Son of God. "St. John had been enabled to see what Jesus of Nazareth was: 'the Christ' and 'the Son of God'; it remained for him to bring home his convictions to others. The Truth was clear to himself, how could he so present it as to show that it gave reality to the thoughts with which his contemporaries were busied? The answer is, by using, with necessary modifications, the current language of the highest religious speculation to interpret a fact, to reveal a Person, to illuminate the fulness of actual life. Accordingly he transferred to the region of history the phrases in which men before him had spoken of 'logos,' 'the word,' 'the reason,' in the region of metaphysics."*

In other words he appropriated the current doctrine of the Logos (whether the form in which he adopted it was shaped by Jewish or by Alexandrine modes of thought matters not for our present purpose), and "with necessary modifications" set it forth as the best and truest explanation of the "glory" which he had beheld in Jesus; the fullest and clearest interpretation of which he could conceive, of the mystery of His Person.

But (and this is the great difficulty which stands in the way of an unqualified acceptance of his report, more especially of his reports of the discourses of

* Westcott: "Gospel according to St. John," Introduction, p. xv.

Jesus) is it certain that he appropriated "the current language of the highest religious speculation," merely because he found it to be the most perfect instrument to make use of when compressing and condensing the actual language employed by Jesus—because he was convinced that in using it he was most accurately setting forth the gist of what Jesus really said?

Can we be certain that he did not to some extent interpret the "glory" of Jesus in the light of these religious speculations, rather than these religious speculations by the "glory"?

May not his conviction that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, have got so linked with them that they exerted an influence not only on the form, but to some extent on the substance of his memories of the words of his Lord? Using as he does, a great philosophic idea, the idea of the Logos, for the purpose of interpreting the Person of Jesus, is it certain that he is not sometimes more under the sway of that idea than of a faithful and accurate memory? Is it certain that he always avoids the error of shaping the discourses of which he is endeavouring to give a condensed report, so as to bring them into harmony with that idea, regardless (perhaps unconscious) of the fact that he is departing widely from the line of thought which they actually took?

Moreover, bearing in mind the fact that he admittedly writes to demonstrate a settled conviction, —and at a time long subsequent to his Lord's earthly life, and when His full "glory" had been confirmed by the Resurrection—is it certain, or even probable, that the author successfully overcame all the difficulties

which the human mind has to encounter in any such attempt as he makes in his work?

It is not easy to accurately report a conversation after fifty years have elapsed. It is very difficult indeed, even when it has recently been listened to, to retain the substance of such a conversation while completely altering its form. It is well-nigh impossible to do this, with a mind preoccupied with the conviction that He whose conversations the writer is thus translating and epitomising, fulfils the root idea of the philosophy in the terms of which he is endeavouring to express the main ideas of the conversations. And when we remember in addition, that the writer could hardly avoid regarding the "glory" of the earthly life of his Lord in the light of His death and Resurrection, the probability of his being able to so "select, arrange, and emphasise" the words he makes use of, as to successfully "convey the proportionate impression of discourses which he apprehends in their totality," is still further diminished.

These are some of the doubts and questionings which present themselves when we study the Fourth Gospel, and especially when we consider the conversations of our Lord which are reported in that Gospel.

We have stated them in their most modified form, the form they take if we accept the Johannine authorship. Even in this form they are sufficiently strong and pertinent to prevent us from according an unqualified trust to the writer, as a correct reporter, when reading his "compressed" reports of the discourses of Jesus. They make us hesitate, for instance, to accept as historical those statements which the Evangelist puts in His

mouth, in which He distinctly affirms His consciousness of His pre-existence. "Before Abraham was, I am." (John viii. 58.) "I came out from the Father and am come into the world." (xvi. 28.) "The glory which I had with thee before the world was." (xvii. 5.) "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." (xvii. 24.) We have no hint in the Synoptic Gospels that Jesus possessed such a consciousness of His pre-existence. But a writer who regarded Him as the incarnated Logos could not fail to conceive of Him as possessing it. And the question must be faced—did our Lord ever, when speaking of Himself, make claims, and use expressions which were at any rate equivalent to those which the writer puts into His mouth; or must we hold that the Evangelist shapes his compressed report so as to harmonise it with the metaphysical conception which dominates his thought? And if, as we hold, there is strong reason to suspect that the latter surmise is correct, then the question to which we must try to find the answer is: what was the actual consciousness of Jesus in this respect; is the justification of the language which the writer of the Gospel makes Him use, to be found in what He *was*, though He may never have given such explicit expression to His consciousness as the writer reports?

We will not at this point discuss the question as to what the actual consciousness of Jesus was in this particular respect. We simply mention the matter now because it is the one in connection with which the doubt most forcibly suggests itself as to whether the writer of the Fourth Gospel can be regarded as an accurate reporter.

And, of course, inasmuch as the arguments for and against the Johannine authorship of the Gospel are so evenly balanced that we are bound to admit it to be quite probable that the Apostle John did *not* write it, there is still larger room for the doubts we have suggested.

For in that case the probabilities are (even if we hold the writer to have been a friend of the Apostle) that he brought to the study of the Person of Jesus a mind previously trained in the religious speculations of the age concerning the Logos. And while we admit how transcendent must have been the impression made upon him by Christian teaching to enable him to hail Jesus as the Word made flesh, we must also admit that that impression, as it is presented to us in the pages of his Gospel, may have been largely coloured by the metaphysical ideas to which he had wedded it.

Having effected an union between his philosophic ideas and his Christian faith, it is quite as probable that the writer viewed the Person of Jesus in the light of these ideas, as that he viewed these ideas in the light of the historic Jesus.

We have not in this case memories of the actual teaching of Jesus condensed by an Apostle, but (at best) a disciple's condensed report of what the Apostle reported concerning his Lord's discourses. How can we, in such a case, say how far the reports express merely the disciple's thoughts concerning Jesus, and how far Jesus' thoughts and convictions concerning Himself?

Our uncertainty, moreover, is greatly increased

when we find that the author more than once passes from what is supposed to be a direct report of a discourse to comment, and reflection, and explanation, without any hint of the transition, and without any change of style. (Cf. i. 16-18; iii. vv. 16, 23, 31, 36; xvii. 3.)

This peculiarity of the writer does not help us to believe that his mind is wholly intent on producing a faithful and accurate abstract of the discourses he is reporting; nor does it predispose us to believe that he simply "selects, arranges, and emphasises words which are . . . best suited to convey the proportionate impression of discourses which he apprehends in their totality."

We have felt bound to state somewhat fully the doubts and difficulties which present themselves when we study the portrait of Jesus which is sketched for us in the Fourth Gospel; or rather, we would say (for we have confined ourselves to this aspect of the question), when we read His discourses as reported in that Gospel. For it is more particularly when we consider the question: To what extent do these discourses contain the actual language which He used concerning himself, or rather (since it is granted that the Evangelist has condensed his narrative, and consequently "cannot have given the exact words, or only the words which were spoken,") to what extent can they be regarded as an accurate expression of the thoughts to which on various occasions He gave utterance?—that the doubts we have suggested arise. We hold it indisputable that the historic framework of the Gospel is in the main reliable.

To some readers these difficulties may not seem to have much weight. They may hold that the insight, power, and judgment of the writer in the selection and arrangement of his language are worthy of entire trust, and may be convinced that, if not the actual language, at least the essential thoughts of Jesus are embodied in his condensed reports.

We are far from saying that this may not be the case; but it seems to us that these difficulties are so real, and so likely to vitiate the testimony of the Gospel to the spiritual consciousness of Jesus in the minds of many, that we are not justified, in our present inquiry, in making use of the language reported in that Gospel to have been spoken by Jesus, as *direct* evidence of the quality and depth of the spiritual consciousness which He possessed.

That, however, does not prevent us from making use of it as indirect evidence. And that evidence is most impressive. The Fourth Gospel stands out as the most splendid testimony to the effect which the personality of Jesus produced on a mind (no ordinary one) which had exceptional opportunities of becoming acquainted with Him.

That the author should boldly enlist the current speculations of the age concerning the Logos in his service; more especially that he should arrive at the conviction that these speculations found their justification and their fulfilment in One who had dwelt among men full of grace and truth; testifies to the overwhelming impression which the "glory" of Jesus produced on him.

And even though the language in which, in this

Gospel, Jesus is reported to have spoken of Himself, cannot be accepted as His *ipsissima verba*, and there is grave doubt as to whether He, on any occasion, *explicitly* unfolded His thoughts and convictions concerning Himself as the writer represents; yet it is less difficult to believe that the Evangelist gives us, in substance, a faithful representation of our Lord's spiritual consciousness, than it is to believe that he is mainly giving us his own thoughts about Jesus, and his conception of the way in which He who was the incarnate Logos would feel and think.

The Gospel furnishes indisputable evidence that it is not a romance—not a mere production of the imagination—but is dealing with the facts of an historic life. And it is impossible to believe that the writer could have put into the mouth of Jesus the language which he reports Him to have used, without having justification for his words in the Manifested Life which he is portraying, if not in the actual language which Jesus employed. He could not have *invented* the conception of One making the claim: "I and my Father are one"; he could not have conceived of One claiming to be the Son of God, and to have the right and the power to do "what things soever the Father doeth," if Jesus had never used language, or assumed authority, or manifested power which justified that claim.

To account for the language which the Fourth Gospel puts into the mouth of Jesus, we are bound to postulate an historic Person who, by the life He lived, the deeds He wrought, and the words He spoke, produced in the minds of those who associated with Him

such a transcendent impression, that they did not hesitate to regard Him as essentially divine—the Son of God, conscious of absolute fellowship with the Father, and claiming all the rights, while at the same time performing all the duties which devolve on perfect Sonship.

Thus the final conclusion to which we are led concerning the conception of the Person of Jesus which we find in the pages of the Fourth Gospel, more especially as that conception finds expression in the discourses of the Lord which this Gospel contains, is this: while that conception may, to a considerable extent, have derived its *form* from the metaphysical speculations of the age, and—being in the mind of the writer previous to the writing of the Gospel—may have so influenced him when reporting the discourses of Jesus as to lead him to infuse a considerable didactic element into his report, so that it may be difficult to decide to what extent he is giving expression in them to his own thoughts and convictions concerning his Lord, rather than giving a faithful abstract of the lines of thought which, on various occasions, Jesus actually followed in His teaching—yet it is impossible not to believe that *in substance* his witness is true, that his conception had its counterpart in a historic Person who manifested such a boundless fulness of Life, and Grace, and Power as to justify the highest claims which He is represented to have made to knowledge of, and to fellowship and union with the Father. If there are difficulties in the way of believing that Jesus in His teaching actually made for Himself the stupendous claims which in the Fourth Gospel He is reported to

have made, there are still greater difficulties to be faced by those who refuse to believe that these claims find their justification in the Life which was manifested in Him. For we may boldly aver that if the Man Jesus was not what He is reported by the author of the Fourth Gospel to have been, then the author of that Gospel must himself have been such an one as the Man whom he depicts. So impossible does it appear to us for any one to have sketched such a portrait unless it was either drawn from life, or the man who sketched it was himself endowed with the life and consciousness with which he credits his subject.*

* The writer has been gratified to find the views which he has set forth in the preceding pages substantially confirmed by Mr. Peyton, in his most suggestive book, "The Memorabilia of Jesus," which did not come into his hands until some time after the present chapter was written:

"The aim of the Memorabilia is not information, but impression, and the impression of a singular fact, even the profound intimacy between Christ and the ideal, mystic, and spiritual world: that He is the Son of the eternal Father, as no one else before Him was, and as such He is the creator of a life not before found amongst men. It traces the growth and the forms of His consciousness. This intimacy of Jesus colours the literature from beginning to end. And the intended impression is no doubt conveyed, not exactly in the diction which Christ employed when speaking to His untrained students, but in a diction which John later on felt more appropriate. It is visible on the surface that the Memorabilia represents Christ speaking in a style different from that in which He is reported by the Synoptics. This 'Memorabilia' touches the Synoptics only in four places; it selects the occasions when Christ spoke on other topics; it gives detailed conversations and condenses long arguments. Have we the very words of Jesus? Suppose we have not. Does the paper on which the letter is written affect its veracity? We want ideas, not words. Words are the paper on which ideas write themselves. The ideas translated into

In the light of the conclusion at which we have now arrived we may proceed to consider the testimony of the Fourth Gospel concerning the spiritual consciousness of Jesus. More especially we may direct our attention to those features of the portrait which seem to be peculiar to this Gospel.

What new light, we may ask, does this Gospel throw upon our inquiry? Does it disclose any new depth in the consciousness of Jesus, of which we have no hint in the Synoptic Gospels? Does it enable us to gain a deeper insight into His marvellous personality?

Many would unhesitatingly answer these questions in the affirmative. We hesitate, however, to do so. For it seems to us that the Fourth Gospel differs from the other three rather in presenting the consciousness of Jesus in a different aspect, than in making us acquainted with new and deeper features of it. At the same time this aspect to which the Fourth Gospel introduces us is, in more respects than one, so unlike

an idiom of Greek words are ideas still. For an epic or drama, it was even necessary that they should suffer this translation. . . What mind in that age could have originated ideas and emotions such as are here reported, which have not their parallel anywhere? Who but one inspired by Christ, through whom Christ's thoughts have passed as into a prism, could have written this literature? Could such thoughts be an invention? Could the situation in which they were spoken be the creation of a novelist? Has a species of human life been ever created by romancing? They are no other than the shivered rays in which the light of Christ's mind as it passed through John's analysed itself. Perhaps some of John's thoughts had passed into another mind before they found expression in the Memorabilia, but they have not suffered in the transmission. The Memorabilia does not betray the piecing of different minds."

(Memorabilia of Jesus, pp. 40, 41.)

that which we contemplate in the Synoptic Gospels, that it behoves us attentively to consider it.

We find then that the chief peculiarity of the portrait of Jesus which the Fourth Gospel brings before us is, that while in the Synoptic Gospels we are left to *infer* the nature and depth of the spiritual consciousness which He possessed from the character of His teaching, the language He employs when speaking of God, and the power He exercised in working miracles and forgiving sins, and (with the remarkable exception reported in Matt. xi. 27; Luke x. 22) never find Him giving direct expression to it; the Fourth Gospel represents Him in every discourse which it records, as turning the thoughts of His hearers to Himself; and as continually making affirmations concerning His unique relationship with God; His consciousness of absolute knowledge of and fellowship with Him; and on several occasions, His consciousness of pre-existence with Him.

With the exception of this last point, which we will discuss more in detail presently, it cannot be said that these affirmations introduce us to any deeper aspect of His Nature than we have discovered in the Synoptic narratives. We have already found from our study of these that we are bound to credit Jesus with an absolutely unique and unfathomable consciousness of communion and fellowship with God; and the explicit statements which, in the Fourth Gospel, He is reported to have made on these points, do but formulate what we cannot but regard as the truth concerning His spiritual consciousness.

At the same time it cannot be denied that it is

not easy to reconcile the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel with the Jesus of the Synoptists. It is difficult to understand why He should "charge His disciples to tell no man that He was the Christ" (Matt. xvi. 20; Mark viii. 30), when He Himself (according to the Fourth Gospel) on many occasions either distinctly asserted that to be the fact (John iv. 26), or made claims which implied it.

The modest, retiring Jesus of the Synoptists seems to be a very different Man from the self-assertive, controversial Jesus of the Fourth Gospel discourses. The Jesus who habitually uses the parabolic method of teaching, is startlingly different from the Jesus who teaches by direct affirmations concerning Himself. The Jesus who is the trusting, obedient, suffering Son of Man, who apparently only at times attained to the full consciousness of His divine Sonship, and did not always clearly foresee the exact course of His career, nor understand the way in which His Father was leading Him, is One whom it is difficult to recognise in the Jesus who seems habitually conscious of His Deity, and who habitually speaks and acts as One who knows that the Father has given all things into His hands, and that He came forth from God, and is going to God.

Doubtless there are not wanting in the Synoptic Gospels (as we have already pointed out) indications of those traits which the Fourth Gospel represents as being normally characteristic of Jesus; just as there are not wanting in the Fourth Gospel traits which bring His humanity prominently before us. But these divine and human traits are proportioned in the

Synoptic Gospels so differently to the way in which they are proportioned in the Fourth Gospel, that the explanation commonly given, that "differences of form and substance correspond to differences of person and place,"* does not seem satisfactory.

The differences are so great that we gladly escape from the difficulty of reconciling the two portraits by accepting the conclusion to which we have been led by the considerations we have advanced above: *i.e.*, that while in substance the testimony of the Fourth Gospel is true, and while it is quite possible that Jesus may have given, on various occasions, direct expression to the unique spiritual consciousness which He possessed, yet it must always remain doubtful whether the form into which the Evangelist throws his testimony can be regarded as an accurate report of historic scenes in His life—whether in the discourses of the Lord as reported by him we are not listening to the writer expounding Jesus, rather than to Jesus unfolding Himself. At any rate, as we have previously stated, we do not feel justified in this inquiry in making use of these discourses as direct evidence concerning the spiritual consciousness of Jesus. The fact that He possessed such a consciousness is, it seems to us, indubitable; we can afford to leave the question in doubt as to whether He so boldly and frequently expressed Himself concerning it, as the author of the Fourth Gospel would lead us to believe.

We have now arrived at a point in our inquiry when

* Westcott: "Gospel according to St. John," Introduction, p. lxxx.

we can calmly consider what is undoubtedly one of the most difficult, as it is one of the most interesting points in connection with the subject we are discussing; the question, namely, how are we to regard the statements which the Fourth Gospel on several occasions reports Jesus to have made, in which He distinctly asserts His consciousness of His personal pre-existence?

The following are the passages in which this claim to pre-existence most distinctly appears (though possibly it is implied in others—cf. John viii. 14 and 23; xvii. 18). "No man hath ascended into heaven, but He that descended out of heaven, even the Son of Man" (John iii. 13); "The bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven." "I am the living bread." "I am come down from heaven" (vi. vv. 33, 35, 38); "I came forth and am come from God" (viii. 42); "Before Abraham was, I am" (viii. 58); "I came out from the Father and am come into the world; again I leave the world and go unto the Father" (xvi. 28); "O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (xvii. 5); "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (xvii. 24).

Such distinct and repeated statements cannot be ignored. Nor can they be explained away. For our previous inquiry has compelled us to admit that the witness of the Fourth Gospel is at least substantially true, and that—even though we may permit the doubt to remain whether the discourses of Jesus which it reports are only and altogether brief abstracts of His

historic utterances—there can be no doubt whatever that His Person and consciousness must have been such as to justify the Evangelist's conception of Him.

In dealing with these remarkable statements in this inquiry (in which, we would remind our readers, we have throughout endeavoured to keep a firm hold on "that which is natural," while feeling our way towards "that which is spiritual") we deem it well first of all, at the risk of repetition, to take note of our landmarks, and to clearly recognise the point at which we have already arrived in our attempt to apprehend the consciousness of Jesus.

We have found, then, from our study of the Synoptic Gospels, that we are bound to credit Jesus with an absolutely unique and unfathomable consciousness of fellowship and communion with God—a fulness of spiritual Life which can only be adequately expressed by calling Him "the Son of God," in a very special, if not in an altogether peculiar sense. We have found Him exercising transcendent power both in the physical and in the spiritual world; presuming to forgive sin, no less than to heal the sick and raise the dead.

And from our examination of the Fourth Gospel, we have arrived at the conclusion that the portrait it draws, though perhaps idealised,* must have had its counterpart and its complete justification in an historic life; the imaginative conception of such a Man as the Evangelist depicts being an impossibility.

* In the sense of being shaped throughout by that highest conception of it which it was only possible to form after the life of Jesus had been consummated by the Crucifixion and glorified by the Resurrection.

We are already then close to the border-line of a region in which "that which is natural" passes altogether into "that which is spiritual." And now we come face to face with this further and most startling feature of the portrait. Is it possible to account for it, and yet to keep our feet on the "natural"; or does the ground fall away from us, not permitting us to advance further? Do we here stand on the edge of the abysmal depths of the unseen universe?

Striving as long as we can to keep our feet on the solid ground of the humanity of Him whose marvellous consciousness we are considering, we may advance the following considerations.

(1) We are in absolute ignorance of the way in which souls come to be. No theory which has been propounded to explain the origin of the spiritual part of our nature—that part in virtue of which we are not merely animals but *men*—can be said to be even moderately satisfactory.

The body forms in the womb under the strict control of physical law; and when it has reached a certain stage of development, "out of the dark" rushes the vital spark which constitutes it a living soul, dowered with all the possibilities of manhood.

But from what vast reservoir of life that spark comes, and whether, prior to finding its tabernacle in the human body, it has previously tabernacled elsewhere; or existed merely as a potentiality; or shared the Consciousness of the Conscious Source of all Life; concerning this we know absolutely nothing.

(2) Again, we cannot circumscribe human nature—either its capacities or its consciousness—with any

lines of limitation. We are absolutely prohibited from dogmatizing concerning the range of its possibilities. Experience is our only guide to an opinion (or conviction) concerning what man may be able to do or be. What the wisest and the best have done and have been, that alone enables us to speak confidently concerning the powers and capacities of Manhood.

Where human life has manifested itself in greatest power and fulness; whether intellectually, as in Homer, Shakespeare, or Michael Angelo; or spiritually, as in Buddha, Isaiah, or Jesus; however surprising and unprecedented these lives may have been, we are bound to accept them as indications of the range and scope of human capacity; we must draw the circle within which human nature is supposed to be restricted *at least* with such a diameter as to include these.

(3) And yet again: though prior to its manifestation we could form only a very imperfect idea concerning Ideal Manhood, and how it would comport itself on the stage of the world, yet we might reasonably anticipate, from what experience has taught us concerning the powers and capacities of Manhood, that if, at any time and place, human life did culminate in an ideal Man, such an one would exhibit a fulness of life and power, and a perfection of character, in line indeed with the noblest who had preceded Him, yet so far transcending them as to make his life absolutely unique in the world's history—unique not only in its combination of qualities, capacities, and characteristics, but also and chiefly *in the modes of his spiritual consciousness.* We should anticipate this, not only because it is on the spiritual side that man's

nature seems to open on the infinite; not only because that part of human life which consists of relations with the unseen—or in other words, the faith, hope, obedience, and love which man is capable of displaying towards God—seems to promise the most boundless possibilities of development (possibilities which in an Ideal Man would become actualities); but also because of the nature of the testimony which the spiritual consciousness of mankind has consistently, though with very varied degrees of fulness and clearness, furnished concerning itself—concerning its essential nature, and its lofty function.

Man's quality and rank in the scale of being have ever been borne witness to by the many, in that men have never been able to do without some religion or other; and though they have often worshipped ignorantly, and have often sunk into gross superstition, they have still been bearing witness to the fact that human life consists not merely in correspondence with things seen and temporal, but also with things unseen and eternal.

And that to which the many have vaguely and unconsciously borne witness, the few, who have been the spiritual aristocracy of the race, have clearly and boldly proclaimed. Not only the unique Man we are now contemplating, but the world's best and most spiritually-minded men in all ages, have clearly and uniformly insisted on the fact that there is an affinity between the nature of man and the nature of God; that "in the beginning God created man in his own image"; that, "Thou madest him a little lower than

God, and crownest him with glory and honour"; that "we are his offspring."

In other words, the best consciousness of the race has consistently testified that the capacity for divine sonship is the inalienable birthright of man.

Unless the world's best and noblest have been deluded dreamers we may hold it proved that the Creator's architectonic idea with regard to man is the idea of a race of beings who shall know, and serve, and love Him *as sons*—with full knowledge, with willing service, and with whole-hearted love; a race which shall share His Glory, and participate in His eternal Life.

But, granting that this be true, then that capacity for divine sonship which is the central thought and idea of God concerning man, involves the fact that God and man are akin.

It necessitates participation in the Divine Nature; it compels the belief that we are offshoots of the Eternal Life, and Mind, and Will; that we all are, as the creed asserts of Him who is our Ideal and Representative, "begotten not made." Though the way in which the Eternal Spirit does thus project into separate existence such offshoots of Himself is an inscrutable mystery, the facts of consciousness, as displayed in the best samples of our race, seem to demand this explanation, and to be capable of interpretation on these lines alone. We have existed from eternity in the thought and emotion of God.

> "Trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God, Who is our home."

But this being so, what limits can we assign to the consciousness of fully developed manhood? Can we not at least say this: that any Man who fully embodies the idea of the Creator must have the consciousness that He is not merely a creature, but a *Son*, and must realise that He can lay claim to all the rights and privileges, as well as that it devolves upon Him to fulfil all the duties, which pertain to, and develop upon, Divine Sonship? And, though we are absolutely precluded from dogmatising on the subject, we hold that it would be reasonable to anticipate that such a Man (whose nature and being must be intrinsically divine, since the divine idea of Manhood, which is Sonship, is embodied in Him) would have a consciousness of *life* so full, so boundless, that Time's barriers would be submerged by it. The fathomless eternity which we are forced to conceive of as lying behind us, could have no existence for One who never had any other consciousness than that consciousness of fellowship and oneness with the Creator-Father, which constitutes the essence of the life of manhood as designed by God. As soon as ever such an One began to be conscious of Himself, He would be conscious of a Life at one with the life of the Creator, eternal, without either beginning or ending; for that is the essential nature of the life of Sonship, and (according to our hypothesis) His rank would be that of a perfect Son, the rank of a Firstborn.

Nay! could we postulate any beginning of being to such an One? Would not His Life, from its very nature, be a conscious portion of the Life of God? If there is an affinity between the nature of man and the

nature of God, must not Ideal Manhood be conscious of its origin, *i.e.*, participate in the consciousness of God?

And when such Ideal Manhood "became flesh," was embodied in a human being, we should necessarily have both an incarnation and a *kenosis*:—an incarnation, because such Manhood is necessarily a perfect revelation of the Deity; a *kenosis*, because perfect Manhood cannot perfectly reveal itself in flesh and blood, and in such a material world as this; for these are but the swaddling clothes and the nursery of the heirs of God.

What kind of life such a "Son of Man" and "Son of God" would live; and how much consciousness of His eternal being He would display; these questions we should find it impossible to answer from any *a priori* reasoning; the manifested Life would alone enable us to answer them.

It may seem to the reader that we have been diverging into a region of speculation very far removed indeed from "that which is natural." Yet into such high regions we are inevitably led when we recognise the truth that human nature is akin to the Divine; and in these regions alone can we hope to find any explanation worthy of being called such, of the consciousness of the historic Man we are contemplating, and more especially of that astounding phase of it which we are now considering.

Jesus is undoubtedly the "Firstborn" of the human race; we cannot conceive of or imagine a nobler, diviner Manhood than that which He displayed. And He undoubtedly laid claim both to the title "Son of

Man," and also to that of "The Son" (of God). We have seen what a depth and fulness of conscious fellowship with God He possessed. Do not these indisputable facts harmonise with and confirm the truthfulness of the line of reflection we have been following? If (as it seems to the writer) they do, then we ought to expect that such an One should sometimes speak in language which revealed a fathomless consciousness of Life—Life eternal, Life uncreated—because Life consciously united to the eternal uncreated Source of Life—the Creator-Father, God.

In the light of the foregoing considerations it is, we think, possible—while still keeping a firm foothold on "that which is natural"—to arrive at something approaching a definite conclusion on the question which has suggested them, *i.e.*, the question of the preexistence of the Man Jesus.

We do not anticipate that this conclusion will be sufficiently definite to satisfy many minds, and it doubtless will be deemed unsatisfactory to those who accept without reserve the birth stories of Matthew and Luke; but we consider it sufficiently remarkable to merit a clear statement, since it shows us how far we can travel towards the conclusions which the Christian Church has formulated in her creeds concerning this deep mystery, without the aid of the birth stories, and while still keeping to the lines on which we have attempted to conduct this inquiry.

Whether, in the light of the conclusion we are about to state, the birth stories themselves may not assume a new significance, and be capable of a new interpretation we will leave the reader to decide. Our endeavour

now is limited to the attempt to point out the inferences which can be legitimately drawn concerning the Person of this divine Man from the investigation of His spiritual consciousness which we have undertaken.

Let us assume then, that Jesus Christ came into the world no otherwise than as other human beings come, *i.e.*, that He was the child of human parents, and that the ordinary processes of nature were not interfered with when "out of the dark" He came.

Yet we have found that there is overwhelming evidence to establish the truthfulness of the statements of the Apostles: "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell"; "the life—the eternal life which was with the Father—was manifested . . . in Him"; "God has revealed Himself unto us in a Son."

He was the Ideal Man—God's idea of Manhood embodied—and because He was that, He was the Son of God—the perfect Revealer of the Father—necessarily so, since man has been made in the image of God, and an Ideal Man must be a perfect image of the invisible God.

We have already pointed out that such a manifestation of Ideal Manhood involves both an incarnation and a *kenosis*. But let us endeavour to arrive at a more exact conclusion concerning the pre-existence of Him who was, we have been led to conclude, both "God manifest in the flesh," and "Man—crowned with glory and honour."

Is a definite belief in His pre-existence necessarily involved in this conclusion! The only answer we can give to that question is "yes, *and no.*"

"Yes," because, as we have pointed out, He was conscious of the possession of Life, at one with the Life of God; and of that Life we can postulate no beginning: it is timeless, eternal, uncreated.

But if we ask: "Did He exist as an Individual Person: did He, after endless ages of conscious personal Life, compress Himself into the limits of a human soul, emptying Himself of the glory which He had with God before the world was?"—to the question, when put in that form, we must unhesitatingly answer: "No."

We grant that the human mind, interpreting baldly some of the New Testament statements on the subject, shows a strong tendency—under stress of the logical rules by which it works—to arrive at some such conclusion as that. But it is a conclusion which is open to this fatal objection; it is impossible to hold it, and at the same time to hold the truth of Jesus Christ's true humanity. To hold that truth is of vital importance; and to hold it with any definiteness is, as it seems to us, impossible, if we postulate in His case either any difference of "*nature*," or any difference of *origin* from our own.

Is it possible, then, to formulate the truth concerning Jesus' pre-existence in such a way as to do justice to His boundless consciousness of Life, while at the same time retaining our hold on His true and full humanity? The prologue to the Fourth Gospel furnishes the answer to this question: "The Word was with God and was God . . . the Word became flesh." The author of that Gospel undoubtedly did not conceive of

"the Word" as pre-existing as a conscious Individual, but as the conscious eternal Mind of God.*

The conclusion we arrive at then is this: that the pre-existence of Jesus Christ (as commonly conceived of and believed in) is not so much untrue to fact as a partial and inadequate statement and conception of fact.

He pre-existed, but only as we, in virtue of our kinship with God, are bound to believe that we have pre-existed. But, in His case, His unfathomable consciousness of Life enabled Him to identify Himself with the Source of all Life—to feel and know that He had Life in Himself, and that that Life was a part of the timeless Life of God.

That is a conclusion in which, as it seems to us, Christian believers can rest, and in which they should be content to rest. "In Him was Life"—boundless fulness of Life, God's own Life. We can be sure of that, and we know nothing definitely beyond that—nothing that is, which throws light upon, and which will enable us more clearly to understand the inscrutable mystery of the life which is His and ours—nothing which will enable us to make any other reply to the question which we are considering, when put categorically—the question: did He pre-exist?—except the one we have given: "Yes, He did, because He was the Life; No, He did not, because He was the Son of Man, and came into conscious personal being

* "John had formulated the proposition: 'The Logos is Jesus Christ.' But, with John, this proposition had not become the basis of every speculative idea about Christ; with him 'the Logos' was only a predicate." Harnack, "What is Christianity?" p. 203.

no otherwise than as such children of men as ourselves."

Doubtless this answer will not content many minds. Many men find it difficult to rest on any conclusion which does not take the form of a positive statement or a positive denial. Yet it seems certain that the highest truths with which the human mind can become acquainted are not capable of being expressed in categorical form: their adequate expression requires both a positive assertion and a positive denial.*

And in contemplating the Person of Jesus we are contemplating the crowning mystery of Life and Truth which God has vouchsafed to manifest to human senses and human understandings—a mystery which can be apprehended indeed, but never comprehended.

We stand face to face with One who was altogether human, and altogether Divine; One who consequently could not have pre-existed otherwise than as every human soul has pre-existed, and yet who must have pre-existed, since He participated in the conscious Life of the uncreated Source of all Life—was with God from the beginning, and was God.

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Here we close our brief inquiry concerning the spiritual consciousness of Jesus. Brief and sadly inadequate we recognise it to be; but had it been twice as lengthy, we cannot believe that it would have been less inadequate.

For in the consciousness of Jesus we meet with Life

* *Vide* Life and Letters of Robertson of Brighton, vol. ii. p. 153.

so immeasurably full, so unfathomably deep, so surpassingly rich, that to comprehend it is impossible; the completest synthesis, the most elaborate explanations, still leave it mysterious, inexplicable.

But though it is not possible to *comprehend* this amazing phenomenon, it *is* possible to apprehend it; and it is in the hope that the line of thought we have followed may enable some to attain to a clearer insight into the depths of the riches of His glory, and to apprehend more firmly "truth as it is in Him," that we have written the foregoing pages.

# EPILOGUE.

READER, we began these pages by contemplating "that which is natural" in the life of the Man we have been studying, and as long as we could, we strove to take the measure of His stature as the Son of Man. Even then we found that the terms "the only begotten," and "the Son of God," could alone adequately express His rank and worth.

But the contemplation of His death and Resurrection have compelled us to take the step from "that which is natural" into "that which is spiritual"—to attempt the exploration of regions where sight and reason fail, and faith and hope alone can guide us.

We have seen that it was impossible to adequately gauge the significance of His death without contemplating the mysteries of sin and redemption, not only from the point of view of man—the sinner, but also from the point of view of God—the sinned-against; and we found that faith in Him, who voluntarily died to save the world from sin, as the Son of God—the acceptance of Him as a perfect manifestation of Deity, as well as the recognition of Him as the Ideal of Humanity—was absolutely necessary if we were to explore the heights and depths of His great redemptive act; nay, that in order to reach a position from which a comprehensive view of His glorious act of

self-sacrifice could be obtained, the standpoint of faith in His Divine Sonship must first be won.

We have seen further that the unexampled event which is recorded in the Gospels as following on His amazing death, was consistently regarded by His Apostles as the consummation of His life and Purpose, and the justification of the faith and hope which they reposed in Him as the Christ and the Son of God. We have endeavoured to show that the view they took of that event, and the supremely important place which they assigned it in their teaching are sober and correct, by showing that such a demonstration as the Resurrection gives us of the fact that His Life was "eternal," and His Purpose "of God," was an absolutely necessary demonstration, since not otherwise could His life, and teaching, and death have been completely explained and justified, and mankind be inspired to accept Him as the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

We are painfully conscious of the feebleness of the attempt we have made to set forth these great matters. We have throughout had to face a double difficulty: the difficulty of the subject itself, and the difficulty arising from the fact that it is a subject which is not new—which has been written upon by innumerable writers in the past, and upon which fresh libraries are being produced in the present day.

Yet in these very difficulties we venture to find some justification for our attempt. If the life of Jesus did not still present to the student many difficulties, it would not be what the New Testament claims it to be—the manifested Life of the Father, the Life of One in whom it pleased the Father that all fulness should

dwell; and therefore inexhaustible. The fact that fresh writers are continually attempting to unfold that fulness is proof that it has not yet been fully unfolded; proof that—

> "The Lord hath yet more light and truth
> To break forth from His Word."

We have tried to set forth in these pages the Light and Truth as it has broken forth from God's Word on us. If they contain no new light for some readers, they may at least, we venture to hope, present the old light with some freshness. In this hope we have written them, and with this hope we send them forth.

In all sincerity we can say with one of the first writers who attempted to unfold the meaning of that Life which was lived among men "full of grace and truth":—

"These are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye may have life in His name." (John xx. 31.)

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